

From the Sepulchre
to the Throne

Madame Cecilia

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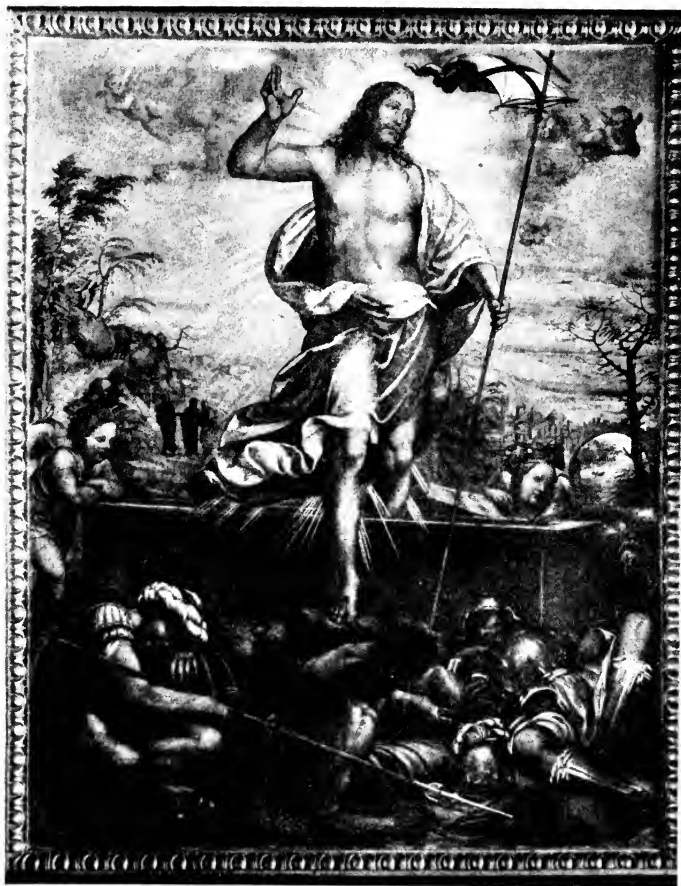


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The Resurrection.

From the Sepulchre to the Throne

By

Madame Cecilia

Religious of St. Andrew's Convent
Streatham, S.W.

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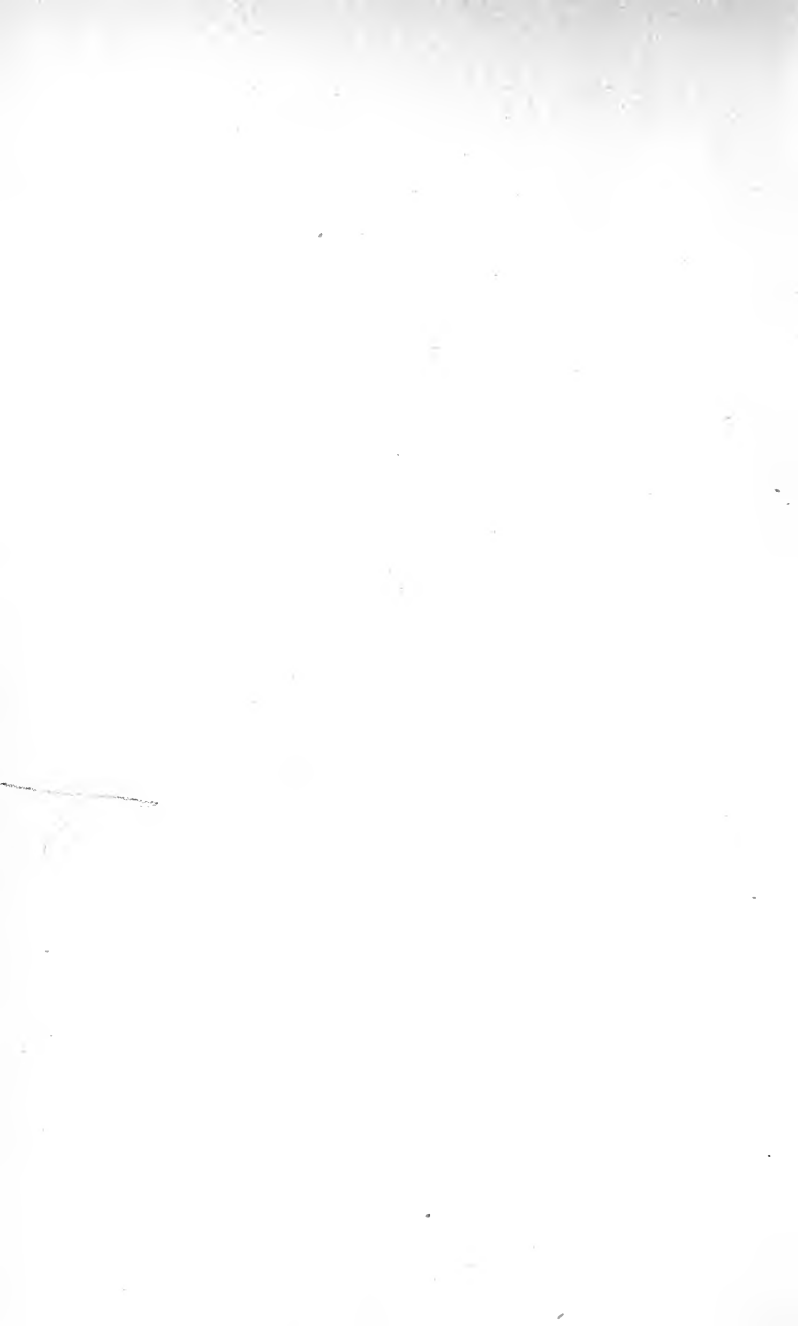
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*“Jesus Christ
who is the Faithful Witness,
The First-begotten of the dead
and the
Prince of the Kings of the earth,
to Him be
Glory and Empire, for ever and ever
Amen.”*

(Apocalypse, i. 5.)



Nihil obstat.

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PREFACE

THIS volume has for object to provide a book of spiritual readings or a series of meditations for Eastertide.

The "Summaries for Meditation"—drawn up according to the Ignatian method—may be useful to those who desire to use this book for their daily meditations. The "Preludes" and "Colloquies" are merely suggestive, but they may be useful, when the mind has to be forced into a given groove.

None can come between the creature and its Creator in the matter of prayer, since God asks for the spontaneous outpouring of the soul. But when the Christian walks *in terra deserta et in via inaquosa*, or is a novice in the science of the Saints—in meditation—a few suggestions which furnish subjects for petitions may be welcome. Such aids to devotion must be *taken* or *left* at each person's discretion.

The Author has endeavoured to bring these sacred subjects before her readers as practically and realistically as possible—to let them see these events as they probably occurred—and at the same time, to refrain from freely indulging in pure conjectures. To this end, the "side lights" of topography and Jewish customs have been thrown on the Gospel narratives as far as possible. Minute exegetical notes and controversial subjects have been excluded, as out of place in a purely devotional work.

In some chapters, the Author has drawn a few paragraphs from her "Catholic Scripture Manuals," since the same *facts* had to be recorded.

This volume takes up the thread of the Author's

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previous work, *Looking on Jesus, the Lamb of God*, which treats of the last six months of our Blessed Lord's Life. This present work deals only with His Risen Life upon earth—with the events of "the Great Forty Days"; all considerations touching the Paraclete and the progress of the Church are reserved for another volume.

MADAME CECILIA.

January 1, 1914.

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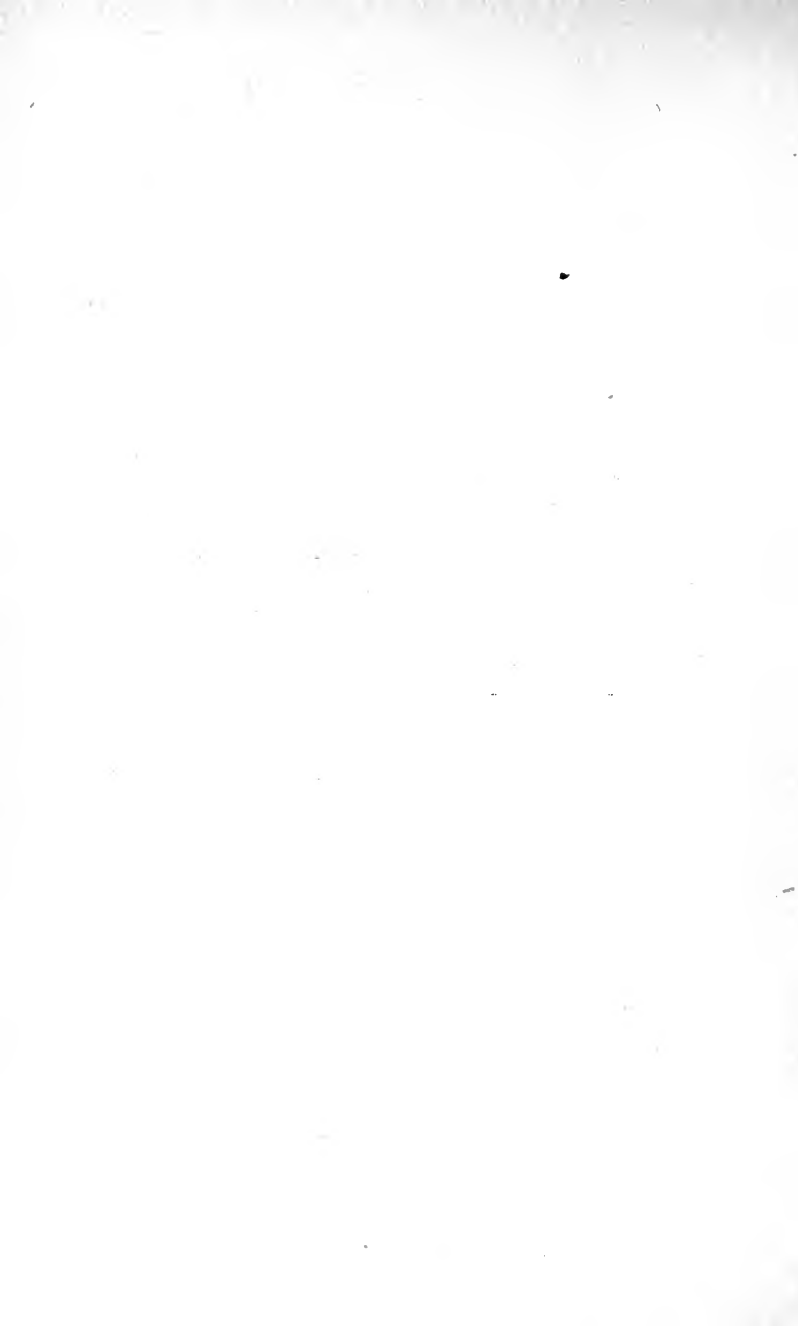
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FROM THE SEPULCHRE TO THE THRONE

I

“ THAT WAS A GREAT SABBATH-DAY ”¹

“ I will wait for God, my Saviour.”—MICHEAS VII. 7.

“ You do well to attend, as to a light that shineth in a dark place until the day dawn and the Day Star arise in your hearts.”—
2 ST. PET. I. 19.

ST. JOHN, referring to the Sabbath which followed the day of our Lord's Crucifixion, writes: “ That was a great Sabbath-day.” It was, in fact, the greatest and most solemn Sabbath of the Jewish year, since it fell within the Paschal Octave.

The Evangelists give no account of what took place on the Sabbath, during which Christ rested in the garden tomb. We know that the disciples of Christ respected the Sabbath rest, for we read in the third Gospel that “ the women who were come with Him from Galilee, following after (*sc.* the dead Body of Jesus) saw the sepulchre, and how the body was laid . . . and on the Sabbath-day they rested, according to the commandment.”

We may also infer that on this Sabbath, the guards were sent to keep watch at the sepulchre, since St. Matthew records that on “ the next day, which followed the day of preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees ” went to

¹ St. John xix. 31.

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Pilate and petitioned him for a guard. Nothing else of the events of that great and ever-memorable Sabbath-day is recorded, doubtless because no special incident occurred.

Yet how we should like to know something about the thoughts and sentiments of Christ's friends and foes during those hours of prescribed rest and worship! Can we glean nothing from the pages of Holy Writ? Can we not read between the lines, and judge fairly accurately of their dispositions, from our knowledge of the respective characters of the Apostles and disciples, and of our Divine Master's foes? Also, seeing that we are conversant with the way in which the Jews spent their Sabbaths, can we not fill in certain details without rashly venturing into the realms of pure conjecture?

Let us reverently make the attempt. Thus, during the hours of the Easter vigil, while we wait for the Resurrection of God our Saviour, for the "Light that shineth in a dark place," our souls will find spiritual nourishment "until the day dawn and the Day Star arise" in our souls. Let us try to reconstitute the memorable scenes that must have taken place on that "great Sabbath-day." By study, devout meditation, and prayerful contemplation, we may thus, in some feeble measure, be allowed to

" Turn back the veil, and see the world as when
The Master walked ;
Delve into the hearts of men, to whom
The Master talked ;
Mark deep the hush of Nature as
The Master slept ;
Tremble with those for whom
The Master wept." ¹

The Evangelists are explicit and unanimous as regards the *day* on which our Redeemer was crucified. We will examine their testimony.

¹ Daniel T. Kissam.

“That was a Great Sabbath-day”

ST. MATTHEW, after having related the burial of Christ, and how “Mary Magdalene and the other Mary” for a time remained sitting over against the sepulchre,” goes on to explain that “*the next day, which followed the preparation,*”¹ the chief priests and Pharisees went to Pilate to ask him that a guard might be sent to keep watch at the tomb.

ST. MARK confirms St. Matthew’s statement and, according to his custom, translates the Hebrew word (*Parasceve*) for the benefit of his Gentile readers. The second Evangelist gives the note of time thus clearly: “And when evening was now come (*because it was the Parasceve—that is, the day before the Sabbath*), Joseph of Arimathea . . . went in boldly to Pilate and begged the body of Jesus.”²

ST. LUKE writes: “It was *the day of the Parasceve (i.e. on which Christ was crucified and buried), and the Sabbath drew near.*”³

ST. JOHN confirms the testimony of his fellow-Evangelists when he says it was “*by reason of the Parasceve of the Jews,*” that “they laid Jesus” in Joseph’s tomb, “because the sepulchre was nigh at hand.”⁴

Now we know that the Jews reckoned their Sabbath from sunset to sunset. Jewish teachers traced this custom to the oft-recurring words found in the first chapter of Genesis. “And the *evening* and the *morning* were the first (second, third, &c.) day.” They remarked the inversion and concluded that the Creator ceased His work of Creation at sunset, and explained that, in consequence, the day began at eventide.

According to the tradition generally accepted, Jesus was crucified on the 15th of Nisan, the first month of the Jewish year. Nisan corresponds approximately to our month of April, and, at the Paschal season, sunset occurs in Jerusalem just about 6 P.M. Jesus expired at three o’clock on Good Friday. The darkness which enveloped the earth “from

¹ St. Matt. xxvii. 62.

² St. Mark xv. 42-3.

³ St. Luke xxiii. 54.

⁴ St. John xix. 42.

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the sixth until the ninth hour " again gave place to light after the earthquake was over. Nature had recorded her protest against the awful crime of deicide, which puny, sinful man had been permitted to perpetrate. Jesus was already dead when, at the request of the Jews, the soldiers proceeded to despatch the two thieves, whose agony was still prolonged. St. John explains the rulers' motive in thus petitioning Pilate: " It was the Parasceve," and " the bodies might not remain upon the cross on the Sabbath-day (for that was a great Sabbath-day)." ¹

Therefore, without delay, they were taken down. The Roman soldiers contemptuously flung the dead bodies of the thieves into a trench near by. Meanwhile, Joseph and Nicodemus were anointing the dead Body of Christ.

When, to the great relief of the Blessed Mother of God and the disciples, the Roman soldiers, carrying the ladders, ropes, and hammers, had left Calvary, we may presume that those disciples of Christ, who had previously " stood afar off " ventured to approach. From St. Luke we learn that the ministering women followed Jesus to the tomb.

Who can measure the sorrow which filled their souls as they turned away from the tomb which contained their Lord? The stone had been rolled up to the entrance; the Sabbath was now close at hand. The second signal would shortly be given from the House of the Lord, and the blasts of the trumpets would announce that the Sabbath rest had begun. Fittingly did the trumpet sound towards three o'clock on that holy day, when Jesus redeemed His people, for the trumpet is a symbol of kingly and divine power, both physical and spiritual, and Jesus had just won the victory over Death and Sin.

The ministering women hastened towards the city. Some appear to have reached their homes before sunset, for St. Luke refers to their having " prepared spices and

¹ St. John xix. 31-2.

“That was a Great Sabbath-day”

ointments,” after which they “rested,” *i.e.* they purchased the spices and began to prepare them on the sixth day, before the beginning of the Sabbath. They commenced their labour of love on the Parascève, just before sunset, and they finished their preparations for anointing Jesus on the following day after sunset. Although Nicodemus had generously contributed one hundred pounds of spices, yet the ministering women longed to add their more modest offering. Others of their company—at least two, if not more—“remained sitting over against the sepulchre.” Thus we may contemplate St. Mary Magdalene and “the other Mary”—the mother of James and John—sitting in silent grief, looking at the sepulchre which contained the dead Body of Him, whom they so loved and to whose service they had devoted themselves and their possessions.

Let us follow the holy women as they hasten home to prepare their spices. It is a spring evening, towards the hour of sunset. All nature teems with signs of life—the barley-fields are ripe unto the sickle; the ears of wheat are rapidly filling out; the fig-trees are in full blossom, and the flowers are budding. Jesus is dead and buried, the darkness and the earthquake are over, and Nature has resumed her wonted garb. Little these sorrowful disciples of Christ trouble about their surroundings. Deep grief blinds us to our environment, or if, by chance, we take note of it, there is so often a jarring sense of the discord arising from what we see around, and the pangs we are suffering interiorly.

Jerusalem is crowded with pilgrims. In every house the Sabbath lamp is now burning brightly. Crowds of people, dressed in festal robes, throng the streets. The vast multitudes of worshippers, who have just left the Temple, are returning to their respective dwellings. For both the Temple and the city gates close at sunset, and some of the pilgrims have their tents pitched on the slopes of Olivet and in the other suburbs of the Holy City. More-

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over, sunset is quite close, and all devout Jews take care not to be more than a Sabbath-day's journey from their homes when the trumpets sound forth the second signal. On their way home, the holy women purchase the spices needed for the ointments they propose to prepare. They reach their dwellings; there, perchance, other followers of Jesus have remained hidden, and the eye-witnesses of the Crucifixion and Burial of Jesus are asked to tell the story of His Passion. We know how touching are the written records of the Passion; how often emotion prevents a preacher from continuing his theme. What, then, must have been the story of the Passion when related by an eye-witness! Friends press them to take food; they feel no need of it, though the customary mourners' "consolation meal" has been prepared by some neighbour. This meal consisted of bread, eggs, and lentils (the last mentioned being a symbol of death). Their one thought is for their Master; in spirit they are with Him in the tomb.

But, hark! The trumpet sounds again—the Sabbath has begun—and "they rested according to the commandment." Throughout those long hours they meditated on the last sufferings and words of Jesus and mourned for Him, as far as the Jewish customs permitted informal lamentation for the dead on the Sabbath.

Meanwhile, Mary Magdalene and her companion have heard the trumpets announcing the commencement of the Sabbath. Yes "the great Sabbath" has begun its course. God, after creating man on the sixth day of the week, "rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done;"¹ in like manner, Jesus, having uttered His blessed "Consummatum est," and redeemed fallen humanity, rested from His labours. On this great Sabbath—the last of the Old Covenant—the sacrifices ceased to have a prophetic meaning, for the types and prophecies which foreshadowed and announced the Atonement had

¹ Gen. ii. 1.

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all been fulfilled. Never will there be another Sabbath so great, so full of blessings for the human race.

We can picture Mary Magdalene as she sits gazing upon the tomb. What a *yearning* sorrow is hers! All light and hope has, for the time being, gone out of her life. Jesus, her All, is dead. She has seen Him cruelly tortured—done to death before her eyes, and she was powerless to prevent men from insulting her loved Master. She could but kneel at His pierced feet and pour out her repentant love, and, as she knelt there, lo, the Precious Blood had trickled down upon her garments! The penitent, who had bedewed His Sacred feet with her tears, was bedewed with His atoning Blood. Silent, speechless, and heart-broken, Mary Magdalene watches and weeps at the sepulchre. Mary, the mother of James and John, sits beside her. Does she realise now what she had asked for when she petitioned that her two sons might be respectively on Christ's right and left when He should enter into His Kingdom? Surely the words of the Redeemer to her sons would have flashed back to her mind and have stood out in their true significance: “Can you drink of the chalice that I drink of?” and in that dark hour of apparent failure and ruined hopes, her mother's heart would have involuntarily framed the petition “God forbid!” Mary, the mother of James and John, had looked to Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah of Israel. Ardent, devoted and loving, she and her sons had thrown in their lot with that of Jesus. Now the awful blow has fallen, and she suffers for herself and her sons. We can conjecture that she was glad that John, her son, had been brave enough to stand by the cross.—No other Apostle had been so courageous.

But there are others waiting on the great Sabbath-day in the Valley of the Shadow, numerous disciples and the eleven Apostles, whose Messianic hopes have been so ruthlessly trampled upon. It must needs be so, for the depth

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of the shadow will give greater relief to the light when the Day Star shall arise in those stricken hearts—it is ever darkest before dawn !

Where is St. Peter ? Since he rushed forth from the court of the high priest, we have heard nothing more about him, except that he was overcome with sorrow for his triple denial. What bitter reproaches filled his soul ! Where did he go ? Probably to some dwelling where he would be out of sight of his Master's foes. Peter loved Jesus with all the ardour of his soul. True, in an hour of weakness, in a moment of panic, and " fear which is nothing else but a yielding-up of the succours from thought," Peter had denied his Master, but when better thoughts prevailed, when the sweet, calm, reproachful glance of Jesus fell upon him, what a revulsion it worked in the fallen Apostle's soul !

The " succours of thought " have returned, grace has touched his soul, and now, through the long Sabbath hours, Peter—the model of all true penitents—weeps bitterly. According to an old tradition, he stole, under cover of darkness, to the blessed Mother of God, in order to accuse himself and seek her help. In all probability, the Apostles found refuge in the Cenacle—the traditional home of Mary, the mother of St. Mark. Contemplate the Eleven during these hours of rest. What terrible memories, bitter reproaches, and sad forebodings overwhelm their souls ! They sit there, now in silence, stunned, paralysed with grief, now exchanging a few words with one another. They are ashamed of their cowardice, each and all. Thomas remembers how he had once generously said to his fellow-disciples : " Let us also go that we may die with him,"¹ and undoubtedly he was in earnest at the time. What a gulf separated the resolution from its fulfilment !

There is St. Andrew, who had brought Peter, his brother, to Jesus. How grieved he is over Peter's denial and his

¹ St. John xi. 16.

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own cowardice! All the Eleven had forsaken Jesus and fled when He was arrested. Now the “little flock,” whom the Good Shepherd loves so tenderly, are cowering together in that upper room, trembling for their own safety, and overwhelmed with the awful memories of their Master’s Crucifixion. Jesus, their All-in-All, has died on the cross—His dislocated, mangled, inanimate Body lies in the rock-tomb. All their Messianic hopes are interred with Him, for, according to the Rabbinical teaching, the Messiah could not die—therefore, they have been mistaken. Jesus was indeed a holy prophet, powerful in word and work, but not the Redeemer of Israel. Thus these heartbroken, loving Apostles foolishly reason, for they still love their dead Master, though all hope of ever seeing Him again is extinguished in their souls. In truth, “on that great Sabbath when they sat and communed thus,” the doors being shut for fear of the Jews, “as yet they knew not the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead.”¹

In their sorrow, perhaps the thought of their own future comes before them now and again. What can they do but return to Galilee as the discredited disciples of the Nazarene, who has been crucified? The mission which they had fondly imagined to be theirs, seems to have completely vanished. Nothing remains for them but to take up the old strands of life, to go back to their boats and nets and, as best they could, bear the brunt of the world’s ridicule and the grief of their disappointed hopes.

Now that Jesus is dead, how bitterly they reproach themselves for having begrudged Him the precious ointment which Mary Magdalene, in her love and clearer foresight, had lavished upon their Lord! He had said on hearing their murmurs: “Let her alone . . . for she, in pouring this ointment upon My body, hath done it for My burial.”² Now they blame themselves for not having grasped His prophetic words literally. They had had so little insight

¹ St. John xx. 10.

² St. Matt. xxvi. 12.

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into His anguish of soul, so little sympathy with His fears ! How they regret this now ! How could they have been so foolish as not to understand that He really was to die the death of a criminal ? Then they think of Judas, the son of perdition. Yes, Jesus, their Master, had actually been betrayed by one of themselves—sold for the price of a common slave. What base treachery ! Yet when Peter thinks of his threefold denial of Christ, and weeps bitterly for sorrow, he dare not launch out in invective against the traitor. Had Peter not sinned thus, how loudly he would have expressed his indignation, but experience of his own frailty has humbled the penitent Apostle. All had forsaken Christ and fled from Gethsemani, leaving Him in the hands of His cruel captors. John alone, sustained by our Blessed Mother, had had the courage to stand by the cross of Jesus. Doubtless the Eleven had heard of Judas' awful end ; they shuddered when they remembered that the Eternal Truth had spoken of him as " the son of perdition." They pitied the fallen Apostle, and thought of him as one, who had been more sorely tempted than themselves.

Looking back to the mighty deeds of Jesus, how inexplicable it seemed that He should have allowed His enemies to arrest Him ! How often, on previous occasions, He had passed unscathed through their midst ! Thus the desolate Apostles wonder, query, pray, and lament throughout the long hours of that memorable Sabbath, while they tremble for their own safety at every unexpected noise. Mourn on, blessed Apostles, for your loved Lord. " In the evening, weeping shall have place, and in the morning gladness." Though now indeed you have sorrow, " Jesus has promised that He will see you again." Though He tarry, wait for Him, and when He comes, then indeed ' your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man shall take from you."

Let us now turn our thoughts to our Immaculate Mother.

“That was a Great Sabbath-day”

Where did she pass that great Sabbath-day? In the dwelling of St. John, probably in Jerusalem. We know that after our Saviour had commended His Holy Mother to St. John, the beloved disciple took her to his own (*sc.* home). We cannot press the words “from that hour,” for neither our Blessed Mother nor St. John would have quitted Calvary before Jesus had expired, nor would they have left the other disciples to bury Him. We do not know exactly whither St. John conducted our Lady. Perhaps to the house of Mary, the mother of John Mark, who dwelt on Mount Sion. An ancient tradition states that it was in this house that Jesus celebrated the Holy Eucharist.¹

The beloved disciple led the Mother of Sorrows away, after the sacred Body of Jesus had been laid to rest. When the stone had been rolled over the entrance to the sepulchre, Mary, carrying the precious blood-stained crown of thorns left the garden with her adopted son. They passed by Calvary, and we may presume that the Mother of Jesus adored the Precious Blood, which had trickled down the tree of shame and bedewed the earth below. She gazed at that infamous gibbet, infamous in the eyes of the world, for her a sacred altar upon which her Son had agonised, from which He had reigned. How men would honour that cross in ages to come! Now it stands out sheer against the darkening lurid sky. The Son of Man has been lifted up. Henceforth He will draw all men to Him. Mary knows this, and the knowledge is her consolation; she knows, too, that He will rise again. Still, she is but human, and her soul has been pierced with sorrows, such as no creature's soul ever has or ever will be pierced with, for Mary was immaculate, and consequently she experienced a horror of sin, of which sinful creatures can form no conception. She realised, too, so fully, the dignity of her Divine Son. When the recognition of this truth was

¹ See *Looking on Jesus, the Lamb of God*, ch. xxxvii. p. 325. ed. 1912.

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obscured in the souls of the Apostles, it was clearly present to Mary. The disciples of Jesus saw Him suffer and they mourned over the tortures inflicted on "the Man Christ Jesus," but they did not then think of Him as God. Mary knew that her Son was God, and to the awful torture of seeing her child crucified, was added that of knowing that these fiendish insults and sufferings were inflicted on the Incarnate Son of God.

Doubtless Mary craved privacy, that she might strengthen her soul by prayer and mourn for her first-born. St. John, respecting her wish, would have left her alone, knowing how impotent words of consolation were to assuage the grief of the Mother of Sorrows. There could be no *formal* lamentation over the Death of Jesus. The "Shibah," or seven days' ceremonial mourning which invariably followed the burial could not take place, for it was the "great Sabbath-day," and on the seventh day, none might inaugurate the Shibah. Again, Jesus had been executed as a criminal, and for such no public mourning was permitted. But on the third day, Jesus was to rise—no seven days' mourning would be needed, nor even commenced for Him, who had triumphed over death.

Yet we can well conceive that some of the Apostles or disciples would try to say a few words of sympathy to the bereaved Mother who was mourning for her first-born. She would admit them and hear from them, as they departed, the familiar formula: "May the Almighty comfort you among all the mourners of Sion and Jerusalem." Then, perhaps, St. John returned from the sepulchre with his own mother and Mary Magdalene. St. Peter, too, visited our Lady, according to an ancient tradition. Thus in silent grief, prayer, and waiting for the dawn, Mary, the Mother of Sorrows, spent that great Sabbath. She knew the first day of the week would restore Jesus to her, meanwhile she consoled His afflicted disciples, and, full of faith and hope, waited for God, her Saviour, for the hour of His

“That was a Great Sabbath-day”

uprising from the tomb. If, as it must needs have been, desolation overwhelmed her pure soul as she thought over the Passion of Jesus, if the acute sensation of loneliness—which ever follows the death of our loved ones—inundated her pure soul, nevertheless, the hope of the Resurrection upheld her during those dark hours passed in the Valley of the Shadows. As we kneel in spirit before Mary, the Mother of Jesus, the Queen of Martyrs, let us salute her in the words of St. Elizabeth: “Blessed art thou among women . . . Blessed art thou that hast believed, because those things shall be accomplished, that were spoken to thee by the Lord.¹ Though Jesus, thy Son, lies in the icy embrace of death, He will rise again to ‘reign in the house of Jacob for ever, and of His kingdom there shall be no end.’”

Where were Lazarus and Martha—the friends of Jesus—during the hours when the awful drama of the Passion was being enacted? We know that Lazarus had incurred the enmity of the chief priests, first, because he was a living witness to the mighty power of Jesus of Nazareth, and, secondly, “because many of the Jews by reason of him (*i.e.* Lazarus) went away and believed in Jesus;” hence the chief priests, when they decided to kill Jesus, “thought to kill Lazarus also.”² Lazarus, the friend of Jesus, was even in greater danger than the Eleven, for we do not read of any formal proceedings being set on foot against them. They ran the risk of an informal arrestation in Gethsemani, but when the rulers had wreaked their vengeance on the Prophet of Galilee, His handful of illiterate disciples were apparently simply treated with contempt, until such time as they went forth boldly to preach the Resurrection of Christ. Doubtless, Lazarus was in some place of safety, hiding from his enemies, and we may conjecture that Martha, who may have been an eye-witness of the Passion, or who certainly had heard many details of our Lord’s

¹ St. Luke i. 45 and 32.

² St. John xii. 9–10.

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Death from her sister, Mary Magdalene, would have taken care to inform her brother of all that had happened. Overwhelmed with grief, Lazarus mourned for his "Friend" and Saviour. The knowledge that the hatred of the rulers had been intensified, and the execution of their vengeance precipitated by his having been raised to life, and that thus, indirectly, he himself had been the proximate occasion of Jesus' Death, must have pierced Lazarus' soul as he thought over the awful sufferings of our Lord. How deeply Lazarus realised that Jesus had died for him!—because He had worked a miracle for him!

How well Lazarus remembered that illness—the last agony! How vividly the recollections crowded into his memory—that moment when, restored to life, he found himself lying swathed in his tomb—how he had come forth in the light of day—the majestic features of his Saviour—the awe depicted on the countenances of all who stood around that grave! He remembered, too, how kindly hands had loosed his bands, how he had fallen at the feet of Jesus, the Master's loving embrace, the return home, and the feast given in Jesus' honour. During that supper, Jesus had spoken of His own Death and burial, but, like the Apostles, Lazarus had not taken the words literally. Now, Jesus his Deliverer, lies in the garden tomb, and His lacerated Body bore witness to the torments of the scourging and the Crucifixion. Could not He who raised Lazarus have foiled those who sought His own life? Why, then, did He not use His Power? But no, He allowed Himself to be "led as a lamb to the slaughter." As such thoughts passed through Lazarus' mind, we can well conceive that the words rose to his trembling lips: "Would to God that He had never recalled me to earth, since this miracle has cost Him His life!"

Thus Lazarus, like the ministering women and the Apostles, foolishly reasoned. All Christ's disciples, so "slow of heart to believe all things" which the prophets

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and even Christ, their Master had spoken, failed to grasp the consoling truth of the Resurrection; they believed indeed that all men would “rise again in the resurrection at the last day,” and doubtless they accepted our Lord’s predictions concerning His Resurrection as references to the general resurrection. Mary, the Mother of Jesus, alone understood the real meaning of her Son’s words. She believed firmly that He would rise on the third day.

There were other disciples of Jesus who, on that great Sabbath-day, mourned for Him, whom they had accepted as the Messiah who should redeem Israel. In the Galilean tents set up on the slopes of Olivet for the accommodation of the pilgrims from the north, many disciples mourned bitterly for Him, whom on Palm Sunday, they had acclaimed with their joyous Hosannas. That was only six days ago, but how much longer it seemed! So many things had taken place between that first day of the week and the great Sabbath day. How much they would have to relate when they returned home! How their festal garments and the enforced joyful note of the Sabbath feast jarred upon them! Some dared not manifest their grief for fear of running any risks as the followers of Jesus of Nazareth; others, who loved Him sincerely, could not restrain their feelings. Had He not blessed their children, fed them in the desert, healed their sick and raised their dead? Had He not spoken to them, as no man had ever spoken?

Never again in the history of our earth will there be such groups of sorrow-stricken, despairing souls since Christ, having delivered up Himself once for us, dieth no more, “death shall no more have dominion over Him.”¹

What lessons may we learn from these faithful mourners, so full of love and yet so weak in faith? Perhaps the most salient lesson is that men’s darkest hours are planned or permitted by our merciful Heavenly Father, and that,

¹ Rom. vi. 9.

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however dark and desolate the long night of sorrow may be, yet we “do well to attend,” “to wait patiently,” for by faith we know that all must come right in the end. Sooner or later, for every faithful disciple of Christ who waits for God his Saviour, the Light will shine in a dark place, the day will dawn, the Day Star will arise in his heart. Yes, even when he mourns those dearest to him, he knows, by faith, that he has but parted from them in time’s brief day, to meet them again on the shores of eternity.

Another lesson stands out clearly in relief, namely, that by our want of faith, we increase the weight of our cross. Our dear Lady suffered on this great Sabbath as no other human being ever has or can, but in her lonely and desolate soul, pierced by the sword, the lamp of hope burned brightly. She knew her Divine Son would rise again on the third day. The weeping women and the griefstricken Apostles had no hope, consequently their burden seemed intolerable. Let us learn from their error to be wiser ; to trust our Saviour and to make our own the triumphant cry of heroic courage uttered by holy Job : “Although He should kill me, I will trust in Him, . . . and He shall be my Saviour.”¹

SUMMARY FOR MEDITATION

First Prelude.—Contemplate the various groups of mourners on that great Sabbath-day—the holy women, Mary Magdalene, the Apostles, our blessed Mother, Lazarus, the faithful Galilean disciples.

Second Prelude.—Ask for the grace of a firm faith in Christ’s promises, that we may never mourn as those who have no hope.

First Point.—Jesus is in the tomb. The Jewish Sabbatical customs are duly observed by the faithful followers of Christ. The ministering women quit the garden, purchase their spices, and return to their homes. Mary Magdalene also leaves the

¹ Job xiii. 15.

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sepulchre with the other Mary. How deep is her *yearning* sorrow, her passionate grief for her Lord, on that great Sabbath!

Second Point.—The Apostles assemble in the Cenacle. They fear and tremble for themselves. They reproach themselves with having deserted their Master. They mourn for Him with a *despairing* sorrow.

Third Point.—Mary, the Mother of Jesus, repasses in the bitterness of her soul all the tortures of the Crucifixion. The image of her Divine Son—dead in the tomb—is ever before her. She knows that He will rise again. Hers is a *hopeful, trusting, loving* sorrow.

Colloquy.—Pray for grace to believe the promises of Jesus, your Master, to hope against hope. Ask that in your dark hours you may cling more firmly than ever to them. Ask pardon for past diffidences and discouragements. Pray for a hopeful, loving submission to God in all your trials of mind, body, or estate. Intercede for those who are in sorrow or bereavement. Ask our Lady to intercede for them and for you.

II

THE GREAT SABBATH IN THE PALACES OF SION

JESUS' FOES: HEROD ANTIPAS, PILATE, AND CAIPHAS

"They rejoiced against Me. . . . They said: Well done; well done; our eyes have seen it."—Ps. xxiv. 15.

"The sinners in Sion are afraid, trembling hath seized upon the hypocrites."—ISA. xxxiii. 14.

WE have contemplated the friends of Jesus as they mourned for Him in the bitterness of their souls on that great Sabbath-day: let us now turn our thoughts to the enemies of Jesus, to Herod Antipas, Pontius Pilate, and Caiphas with his kinsmen and friends. What were their sentiments on this memorable Sabbath, and where did they spend it?

The three rulers who sat in judgment upon Jesus, all dwelt on the mountain south-west of the Temple. This district was known as the Upper City in the time of Christ, and "Sion" was the name then given to the Lower City on the southern slopes of the Temple Mount. Since the fourth century, however, the name "Sion" has been given to the south-western part of Jerusalem both by Jews and Christians.¹

¹ "Sion has been supposed by Robinson, Williams, Lewin, and De Vogüé to be identical with the Upper City of Josephus—the hill traditionally called 'Sion' since the fourth century. Colonel Warren, on the other hand, identifies Sion with Akra, and supposes it to have been north of the Tyropœon Valley, while Fergusson identifies it with the Temple Hill. Captain Condor while placing

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Let us take our stand upon the magnificent bridge which spans the Tyropœon Valley, connecting the eastern with the higher western hill—the Lower with the Upper City. This bridge was built long before the kingly builder—Herod the Great—beautified the Holy City, for, over it, Pompey passed when he profaned the Temple of God. It is a colossal structure, fifty-one feet wide, standing upon five arches, of which the span of each measures forty-two feet, while the massive piers, which support them, rise one hundred and twenty feet from the depths of the ravine.

What a train of associations, sacred and historic, what a crowd of feelings, joyous and sorrowful, press upon us as we gaze upon this noble bridge! Many a time in days gone by have the kings of Juda marched across it in solemn splendour to pay their vows to Jehovah in His Temple. Many a time has Jesus our Redeemer crossed this bridge; but a few hours ago, He who now lies in His tomb was led over it—a captive guarded by the Roman soldiers, as they hurried Him to the palace of the High Priest on Mount Sion. We look forward some thirty years and a vision rises before us—we see Titus standing upon the shattered arch, appealing to the defenders of Sion to lay down their arms and accept the yoke of Rome, while behind him the flames from the burning Temple cast their lurid glare over the awful scene. But thirty years and this massive bridge, yonder glorious Temple, and the palaces in Sion will be levelled to the ground, and this is but a small part of the chastisement meted out to the guilty city.

'the stronghold of Sion' in the Upper City, has professed to reconcile these various views by regarding 'Sion' as a general and poetic title ('Sion'=the sunny mountain) applying to the whole of Jerusalem as known before the Captivity."—(*Survey of Western Palestine: Jerusalem*, vol. vi. p. 93.)

Whichever be the view adopted as to the exact part of Jerusalem indicated by "Sion," it is certain that the three palaces, inhabited by Herod, Pilate, and Caiphas respectively, were situated on the south-western hill.

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Now let us fix our gaze upon Sion. It lies due west and rises from the steep western scarp of the Tyropœon Valley up to the plateau, which Herod has levelled to provide a spacious site for his royal dwelling. Sion is a city of palaces—the aristocratic quarter of Jerusalem. The extreme western boundary stands some 2500 feet above sea-level and 120 feet higher than the Temple area. The whole district is dotted with palatial dwellings. Narrow streets running northwards and eastwards separate the various buildings. The footpaths stand three or four feet above the causeways, lest the pedestrians should incur legal pollution by coming into contact with any unclean object.

Southwards, we notice the pinkish-yellow hills of Moab, and the deep blue waters of the Dead Sea, and beyond them the myriads of sand hillocks which distinguish the Desert of Judea. On our left, Mount Olivet rises higher than Sion. If we look towards the north, the Temple stands out against the sky in all its beauty, and beyond it, we notice the square fortress of Antonia with its lofty towers at each corner. Beneath our feet, yawns the precipitous Tyropœon Valley, of which the steep western scarp rises about 120 feet from its lowest part.

As our eyes fall on these scenes of marvellous beauty, the words of the psalmist seem to re-echo in our ears. Well may he, in his inspired psalms, have thus sung the praises of Jerusalem: "Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of our God."¹ "He shall not be moved for ever that dwelleth in Jerusalem. Mountains are round about it."² "The Lord hath chosen Sion, He hath chosen it for His dwelling."³ There alone could sacrifice be offered to Jehovah, and there the Lamb of God was immolated. Thoughts which lie "too deep for words" crowd in upon us as we contemplate the Holy City in the days of its greatest glory—that land hallowed by the presence of the Word made flesh, that city without which He now lies entombed.

¹ Ps. lxxxvi. 2.

² Ps. cxxiv. 1.

³ Ps. cxxx. 13.

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We will accept the psalmist's invitation: "Surround Sion and encompass her, tell ye her towers."¹ Leaving the bridge and turning to the left, we find ourselves in the vast covered stadium called the Xystus. Already in the days of Antiochus Epiphanes—"the illustrious"—the Jews had built themselves "a place of exercise in Jerusalem"² in imitation of the Greeks. But this covered colonnade on which we are gazing is far more beautiful, for Herod the Great built it as a fitting approach to his royal palace on the brow of the Hill of Sion. Here large assemblies gather for pleasure and for business. Look at that ancient castle just beyond the Xystus, close to the old city wall, built by the different kings of Juda. It is the ancient fortress erected "by the children of Asmoneus (*i.e.* by Simon Machabeus), the Royal Palace of the Asmoneans." From the upper storey, we can overlook the Temple Cloisters and Courts.

Who dwells here now? Herod Antipas, "that fox" who murdered St. John the Baptist, and to whom Jesus, when questioned by him, opposed the majesty of silence. It was here that Herod and his courtiers despised and mocked Jesus. They rejoice that the Galilean prophet, who refused to work a miracle to please the king and courtiers, is now dead. While Herod banquets on this great Sabbath, his sycophants relate what they have heard in the city concerning Jesus of Nazareth. The king, who has long desired to kill him, rejoices: Herod, that cunning, intriguing "fox" is glad, because the Roman soldiers have accomplished what he himself would have liked to have done, but having killed St. John the Baptist, and thus angered the Jews, he dared not venture to lay hands on Jesus. The words of the psalmist re-echo in that princely banquetting hall: "Well done, well done, our eyes have seen it."

Yet this wicked joy is not unmingled with fear, for Herod knows all about the mysterious phenomena connected

¹ Ps. xlvii. 13.

² 1 Mach. i. 15.

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with the death of Jesus. He remembers the martyrdom of John, and his fears lest his victim and Jesus might be one and the same person ; lest John had indeed risen from the grave. The Prophet of Galilee had foretold His own death when, in answer to Herod's messengers, He had said : " Go tell that fox : Behold I cast out devils and do cures, and the third day I am consummated." ¹ The prophecy has been fulfilled, the Galilean is dead. What if the prediction of His resurrection, which men say He has also foretold, be likewise fulfilled ? If Herod rejoices that he is now friends with Pilate, who has rid him of Jesus, he cannot but fear in his inmost soul. He had shown respect for the Baptist and had put him to death reluctantly—for his oath's sake—but Jesus he had mocked and outraged : what if this Prophet and Wonder-worker should rise and torment him ? Surely we are justified in applying the prophetic words to this cunning king : " The sinners in Sion are afraid, trembling hath seized upon the hypocrites."

Leaving the venerable Asmonean palace, we turn westward, and passing along by the ancient boundary wall, we reach the Royal Palace of Herod the Great, originally built for himself and his descendants. Archelaus, his son, dwelt there until his banishment to Vienne in Gaul, and since then this Royal Palace has been the residence of the Roman Procurators. Pilate dwells here whenever he comes up to Jerusalem. What a compact mass of buildings ! The northern part consists of a fortified castle with three large towers—Hippicus, Phasaël, and Mariamne, named respectively after Herod's friend, brother, and murdered wife. The Mariamne Tower stands on the eastern side of the Castle enclosure, Phasaël forms the north-eastern angle, and Hippicus the north-western. Phasaël, the highest of these three towers, is 160 feet high ; Mariamne, the lowest, 115 feet. The bases of these towers are built of solid masonry, on which there are immense cisterns. Over these,

¹ St. Luke xiii. 31.

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we see the soldiers' quarters, armouries, and storerooms. Turrets crown these towers, and spacious breastworks provide places for the slingers and archers in time of war.

Beyond the Castle—farther south—is the Royal Palace, which surpasses even the Temple in magnificence. The architecture—Greco-Roman—and more Greek than Roman, reveals the royal builder's Hellenistic taste. Look at the vast courts and the broad terraces with their columns of serpentine and porphyry! A strong wall, thirty cubits high, surrounds the whole block of buildings. At regular intervals, turrets rise above this wall, designed both to beautify and defend the palace. Each tower is built to accommodate one hundred guests, and the two royal banqueting halls, the Cæsarium and the Agrippium, afford space for vast assemblies. In these, the State banquets are given, and on this great Sabbath the Roman Governor, his wife, and numerous guests are banqueting.

The open courts are planted with fruit and forest trees. Tall poplars rise against the skies. Flocks of tame doves may be seen circling round. A canal passes through the garden, and fountains spring from bronze statues. In this truly Royal Palace, we may gaze in spirit upon the Roman Governor, whom the Jews detested for his various acts of tyranny and cruelty, and who but recently has mingled the blood of some Galileans with the blood of their sacrifices. They hate Pilate, although he has given in to their wishes and handed over to them the Galilean, whose Precious Blood they have so gladly poured forth in their blind fury.

Procla has related to her husband the terrible dream concerning that "Just Man," and this narration has greatly increased Pilate's anxiety. Like all selfish, unprincipled men, he puts forward the plea of expediency in order to justify his cruel, cowardly action. He recalls how he has already offended the Jews by commanding the Roman standards with their emblems to be carried into their

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Holy City and was forced to remove them. Also they had appealed successfully to Tiberius when he placed those gilded shields on which were invocations to the gods. Then he had rifled their sacred treasure chests, and but a short time ago, those Galileans had been slain during the Paschal season in the Temple Courts.

These things happened before the Roman Governors were allowed to take their wives with them, when stationed in a provincial district. Profiting by this permission, Procla has come up to Jerusalem with her husband. In reply to her reproaches, we seem to hear Pilate assuring his wife that, had she seen the infuriated Jews on those occasions, she would not have advised him to spare this Galilean and to run the risk of his being again reported to the Emperor. Besides, he had tried to release Jesus, knowing that the rulers had delivered Him up through envy, and he had even caused Him to be scourged, hoping thereby to pacify their vengeance. Nothing but the blood of this Nazarene would satisfy these enraged rulers; even the populace clamoured "Crucify Him, crucify Him." Only when the rulers had questioned his loyalty to the throne of Cæsar had he abandoned Jesus to their will. As a sign that the guilt was theirs, not his, he had even publicly disclaimed all responsibility by washing his hands in their presence. They had accepted the guilt of that Nazarene's Blood and exonerated him. Now all is over, Jesus of Nazareth is dead, and, at the chief priests' request, he has sent guards to keep watch at the tomb until the third day—a useless piece of work—but it was better to yield to their petition. Now he wishes to hear no more about the matter.

Claudia Procla is silenced but not convinced. Some years later when, giving up the Jewish faith—to which she was a proselyte, according to an ancient tradition—she embraced Christianity, it must have been a consolation to remember that she had interceded for that "Just Man," and had striven to obtain his release. Christians in all

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ages bless her for her brave deed, her name will be honoured, whereas as long as time lasts, countless generations—as yet unborn—will learn that the Incarnate Son of God “suffered under Pontius Pilate.” This Roman Governor will be held up to execration as an example of a coward, who sacrificed duty and principle to further his own interests.

Jesus is dead! His unjust judge tries to dismiss the subject, to forget the Prisoner whose majestic demeanour inspired him with such awe, whose words were so calm, whose claims so great. Like Caiphas and Herod, Pilate decides that it is “well done,” for the trial and condemnation of Jesus have ingratiated him with the Jews and reconciled him to Herod Antipas. The death of the Galilean Prophet, innocent as he was, has furthered Pilate's interests, and the time-serving judge does not look beyond this narrow boundary to the life of the world to come. How many thousands of earth's denizens do likewise!

Now we will visit another place—that of Caiphas the high priest. It stands on the southern slope of Sion, between the house of Annas and the Cenacle. It was a palace and a court of justice. In this palatial residence, we may conjecture that Caiphas and Annas, together with their kinsmen John and Alexander, partook of the sumptuous banquet on this the greatest of all the Sabbaths of the year.

The wealthy Sadducees and the proud Pharisees had at last satisfied their implacable hatred and vengeance. From the commencement of Jesus' public ministry, the rulers of Israel had opposed Him. His mighty works had spread His fame throughout Judea. This aroused their jealousy, and when Jesus was ultimately taken prisoner and brought before the Sanhedrin, His enemies eagerly sought for witnesses whose testimony, true or false, would serve as a pretext for condemning Him. Some months before they arrested Jesus, these Jewish rulers had decided to kill Him; they were simply awaiting their opportunity,

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for it appeared desirable that the judicial murder, they had decided to commit, should have some justification in the eyes of the people. Judas Iscariot's treachery and the false witnesses brought about what the rulers of Israel desired. The trial was quickly finished, the pre-arranged verdict pronounced, and the execution had swiftly followed. The foes of Jesus congratulated themselves on having at length compassed His death. "They said: Well done, well done, our eyes have seen it!"

We know that the chief priests both mocked at and blasphemed Christ, as He hung upon the cross. Their mocking taunt rang out: "He saved others, Himself He cannot save: if He be the king of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him. He trusted in God; let Him now deliver Him, if He will have Him, for He said: I am the Son of God."¹ It is, however, certain that these chief priests did not remain on Calvary until Jesus expired, for by looking upon the dead they would have incurred legal pollution. Doubtless, they were already on their way home, when the first blasts of the trumpet announced that the Sabbath was near at hand. Having taunted their Victim and gloated over His awful sufferings, these priests hurry away to perform their ablutions and put on their festal robes before reclining at the Sabbath banquet. Caiphas, in company with his companions in iniquity, took great care to avoid coming into contact with any unclean object, as they returned to his palace on Mount Sion from the Temple or from Mount Calvary, if he was one of those chief priests who reviled the Lamb of God upon His raised altar of holocausts.

What are Caiphas' thoughts as he reclines at table partaking of the Sabbath banquet on the great Sabbath? The Jews were commanded to rejoice and to provide the best meats they could afford on *every* Sabbath, but on this, the greatest Sabbath of the whole year, the richest feast of all

¹ St. Matt. xxvii. 42.

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was spread. Caiphas is a rich man, and for this festival gathering a sumptuous banquet is prepared.

Surely the pale, majestic Face of Jesus seems ever before the eyes of this guilty judge! The Galilean's words ring in his ears: "I say to you, hereafter you shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of the power of God, and coming in the clouds of heaven."¹ He had claimed to be the Son of God! What if He were indeed a prophet. But no, that could not be, for were He so powerful, He would not have allowed Himself to be captured. Still, that strange, awful darkness and the earthquake, had they any connection with Jesus' death, or were they simply striking coincidences? Caiphas strives to dismiss the subject; he joins in the conversation, but still the thought of his Victim haunts him.

While he is thus reasoning within himself, striving to justify his evil deed and to persuade himself that it was expedient that one Man should die for the nation, that the death of Jesus of Nazareth was necessary in order to avoid an uprising in His cause—that he, the ruler of Israel—had but performed his duty in condemning Him—even while Caiphas thus strives in vain to deaden his conscience, an eminent official comes in haste from the Temple and asks to see the high priest—the appointed guardian of the House of the Lord—on urgent business.

Caiphas gives orders for him to be admitted, and the messenger announces that the beautiful Babylonian curtain which hangs before the wooden partition, separating the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies, has been mysteriously rent in twain, from the top to the bottom, by an invisible hand. Another portent! Who has dared to commit this sacrilege? Yet the Temple is well guarded. The matter must be seriously investigated. Meanwhile let it be repaired provisionally, as quickly as possible, for at the morning sacrifice, the hanging before the porch leading

¹ St. Matt. xxvi. 64.

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into the Holy Place must be drawn back that the worshippers may see the Golden Candlestick, the Altar of Incense, and the Table of Shewbread—a privilege only accorded to them at the three solemn feasts and on the Day of Atonement—a privilege which they greatly prize. How troubled the guilty high priest is on hearing the news, though he tries to appear calm, but “the wicked are like the raging sea, which cannot rest. . . . There is no peace to the wicked saith the Lord of Hosts.”¹ Caiphias has stained his hands with the blood of Jesus of Nazareth; well then may his sinful soul be tortured by strange, undefined apprehensions!

Probably Annas and other chief priests recline at table in Caiphias' Palace, at the banquet of that great Sabbath. They speak of Jesus of Nazareth, rejoicing that a well-deserved punishment has been meted out to Him. But in vain the high priest and his accomplices utter the prophetic words: “Well done, well done, our eyes have seen it!” Their reciprocal congratulations have a hollow sound. Conscience belies their words. They still fear that dead Man in His sepulchre. What if He should rise again? But no, the tomb is well guarded lest any false reports of His having risen again should be circulated. True, He raised others, but He cannot raise Himself, any more than He could save Himself, and come down from the cross. Thus these workers of iniquity strive to stifle their unconfessed fears. That meal is no festal banquet, for the question is ever present to their minds: “Have we really done with Jesus of Nazareth? Are we at last well rid of Him?”

Let them wait until the Feast of Pentecost, some fifty days later. Then their own words will be accomplished: “The last error shall be worse than the first.” Two of the Nazarene's disciples, Peter and John,—humble Galilean fishermen—will be arraigned before “Annas, the high priest,

¹ Isa. lvii. 20.

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and Caiphas and John and Alexander,"¹ and "many of the kindred of the high priest." They will be asked "by what power or by what name," they have healed the lame beggar at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple. What answer will they receive? One which will re-echo, not only throughout the judgment Hall, and in Jerusalem, but which will be heard throughout the world in the course of ages, and the Galilean fishermen's words will arouse the latent hushed fears of Israel's proud rulers. In presence of the imposing assembly of the Sanhedrin, Peter will boldly answer: "Ye princes of the people and ancients, hear. Be it known to you all and to all the people of Israel, that by the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God hath raised from the dead, even by Him, this man standeth here before you whole."² Then they will realise that, in spite of their crime and scheming, the Galilean has conquered—the last error is worse than the first in their opinion.

The banquet is over; the host and his guests retire to rest. They are weary, for last night they had little or no sleep. It was spent in plotting against the Anointed of the Lord and in compassing His Death. On the morrow they must be up betimes to assist at the morning sacrifice. The high priest usually officiated on festival days and on Sabbaths; therefore we are justified in concluding that Caiphas officiated in the Temple on that great Sabbath, which followed the Parasceve, the day of our Lord's Crucifixion. In his blind pride and obstinacy, he may even have given thanks to the God of Israel, that the Seducer of the people had fallen into the hands of justice.

While the enemies of our beloved Master alternately experience feelings of malicious joy and vague fears, He lies motionless in His borrowed tomb. Soon the solemn feast will be over; this "great Sabbath" will give place to that still greater "first day of the week," when the Son

¹ Acts iv. 6.

² Acts iv. 8-10.

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of God shall come forth from the grave, when, having risen from the dead, "death shall have no more dominion over Him." Lovingly and confidently, in company with His Holy Mother, we wait and watch for the first rays of that blessed resurrection morning, which is an earnest of our triumph over death, in and by Him.

SUMMARY FOR MEDITATION

First Prelude.—Standing in spirit upon the bridge which spans the Tyropœon Valley, contemplate the Hill of Sion and its palaces—the Asmonean Palace near the north-eastern angle, the Royal Palace due north-west, the Palace of Caiphas on the southern slope.

Second Prelude.—Pray for firm faith and hope when we suffer at the hands of men—for grace to hold firm, to look to the end—beyond the things of time.

First Point.—Contemplate Herod Antipas, the cunning, sensual foe of Christ. Note the mingled sentiments of this sinner in Sion—vain joy, alternating with vague fears.

Second Point.—Consider the sentiments of Pilate, the base, cowardly judge, attached solely to his interests.

Third Point.—Note how Caiphas and his companions gloat over the fate of the Prophet of Galilee, how these ambitious, envious, hypocritical foes of Christ congratulate themselves on their cruel deed. They rejoice, and nevertheless tremble.

Colloquy.—Ask that evil passions may never rule you. Pray for grace to watch over the beginnings of evil. Intercede for those who persecute the Church of God and for those who are oppressed. Pray for a firm faith in your hours of trial.

III

THE GREAT SABBATH IN THE TEMPLE

“The Lord hath chosen Sion ; He hath chosen it for His dwelling.”—Ps. CI. 14.

LEAVING the Hill and palaces of Sion, after the Sabbath banquets, while the guilty rulers of Israel are striving to snatch a few hours of sleep, we will pay a visit to the Temple and take our part in the night vigil there. Then, when the day “dawneth towards Hebron,” we will still linger in those sacred precincts and see how the hours of the great Sabbath are spent in the House of the Lord.

The Jews had an adage : “There is no Sabbath in the Temple,” and the animated scenes upon which our eyes fall, prove the truth of the saying. From sunset to sunset on the Sabbath, as upon all other days, priests and Levites were hard at work in the Temple, fulfilling their respective duties. On the three great festivals, and especially during the Paschal season, extra priests and Levites were on duty, for in addition to the customary morning and evening holocausts, hundreds of sacrifices were offered for private individuals and families.

The Jews divided the night into three watches—*i.e.* the first, the middle, and the morning watch, commencing respectively at sunset, at 10 P.M., and at 2 A.M. On this great Sabbath, the massive Temple gates have been closed at sunset, as usual. We will commence our vigil during the first watch of the night. The priests of the outgoing course, as well as those of the incoming one, are gathered

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in a spacious domed dining-hall—one of the upper apartments of Bet-ha-Moked, *i.e.* the Chamber of the Hearth. This building, set apart for the use of the priests, stands close to the north-eastern angle of the Inner Court, in which the sacrifices are offered. The dining-hall is built over the terrace of the Chel, for in the apartments situated directly over the Inner Court, the priests may neither sit nor lie down.

In the spacious guard-room on the ground floor, a large fire burns continually, that the priests, who always minister barefooted, may warm themselves. At the entrance to this apartment, ten priests and ten Levites keep guard. Note that priest keeping watch beside a stone slab with a ring in the centre. Under that stone the keys of the Temple are kept, and he must be ready to hand them over to the officer in charge, who will come for them during the third watch. As the thirty men on duty watch to-night, they are relieved from the burden of carrying two torches, for it is the Sabbath and the Temple lamps are all alight to save unnecessary work on this holy day.

We ascend the stone staircase that leads up to the dining-hall. At least four hundred priests are gathered together there; and were we to visit the dining-hall set apart for the Levites, we should find as many there. All are at table partaking of the festal Sabbath meal. As they "serve the altar, they live by the altar," and oil, wine, and meal, as well as certain portions of the victims and the loaves of proposition are set aside for them. Levites prepare the meal and wait upon the priests. Watch the faces of these Jewish priests as they partake of the Sabbath banquet. Look at the passion depicted on some of the faces. Note the look of intense sadness or perplexity on a few others. Conversation is very animated, for stirring events have taken place in Jerusalem during the past week, and especially during the last twenty-four hours.

Those whose ministrations will close after the morning

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sacrifice has been offered, have much to relate to the course now entering upon its work. The outgoing course have witnessed the Triumphal Entry of the Prophet of Galilee into Jerusalem. They saw Him turn out the vendors from the Temple. Awed by His majestic demeanour, they dared not attempt to resist His will. They listened to His marvellous instructions in the Cloisters on "the day of questions," and know how enraged the rulers were when He had foiled them in their attempts "to catch Him in His words." They themselves, for the greater part, at least, had shared the rulers' indignation. Then the whole drama of the Sacred Passion is related, for some of the incoming course of priests have seen Jesus condemned, others have gazed upon Him as He hung upon the cross, and heard the high priest and his companions mocking at Him in His torments. As the awful tragedy is related, how some of these priests—indeed the greater number by far—express their satisfaction, and glory in the triumph of their rulers, who have revenged themselves so fully. "Well done, well done, our eyes have seen it."

Suddenly all the faces blench and there is a look of fear on everyone. What has happened? The conversation has turned upon the portents—the earthquake, the darkness, so sudden and so continued that it was necessary to light the lamps in the Temple during the afternoon sacrifice. Then, too, the rending of the curtain in the Holy Place—what could these prodigies signify? Even now some priests are at work repairing the curtain, for during the morning sacrifice on the morrow, the hangings before the Holy Place must be drawn back, that the worshippers may see the incense offered to Jehovah. But they may not look into the Holy of Holies, except on the Day of Atonement, nor can they be allowed to see the curtain rent. No human hand did that impious deed, that is certain!

Thus these priests, while supping, discuss the strange events of the last week, and, when speaking of the portents,

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each relates his impressions of the earthquake,—the awful darkness, and when he first heard of the rending of the sacred veil. All are greatly stirred by these strange supernatural events. Perchance, some half-hearted disciple of Jesus ventures timidly to ask : “ Think you not, brethren, that these mysterious portents may have some connection with Jesus of Nazareth ? ” “ What if, after all, He were really a prophet of the Lord ? ” Instantly the fury and indignation of the majority of the priests are aroused, and they retort, “ Art thou, then, one of the Galilean’s disciples ? ”

In the Levites’ dining-hall conversation follows the same train. In the Temple, during the first night-watch, before the active duties call each to his respective post, priests and Levites speak of Jesus’ mighty deeds and His awful Death. The majority think that the Nazarene has met the fate due to a seducer of the people ; a very small minority condemn their cruel, unjust rulers, at least in their inmost souls, though fear counsels them to keep a prudent silence. As in the Sanhedrin there were secret disciples of Jesus, so among these priests—many of whom were so soon to be “ obedient to the faith,” He had some timid followers.

The conversation is interrupted by a peremptory knocking at the door. It is the “ head of the course,” who comes during the first watch—much earlier than usual—because the great Sabbath brings so much extra work. On account of the numerous sacrifices which are to be offered for the pilgrims, as well as the inhabitants of Judea, the priests have to commence their duties betimes. He comes to summon the priests to assemble in the Gazith or hall of polished stones on the southern side of the Inner Court, and built partly over the Chel, like the Chamber of the Hearth. The first lot is now cast, and this decides which priest is to prepare the Altar of Holocausts by removing the ashes and renewing the pyres. The priest appointed builds up two large pyres—of any sound wood, except the olive or vine—and a smaller one of the best fig-wood,

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whence the burning charcoal required for the Altar of Incense will be taken.

Before commencing his duties, however, he must listen in silence to the prescribed admonition: "Touch not the sacred vessels before thou sanctifiest (*i.e.* by washing) thy hands and feet at the laver." Watch him as he reverently goes up the inclined plane, which leads to the uppermost section of the altar, and, with the assistance of his attendants, prepares the pyres after having removed the ashes.

What an immense massive altar! It is built in three sections, of which the lowest plinth measures 24 × 24 yds.; the uppermost, 14 × 14 yds., giving an area of 196 sq. yds. To allow the priest to walk around the altar, there is a narrow circuit enclosed by a balustrade. This footpath stands nine feet from the ground and three feet from the surface of the top plinth. The surface of the altar has immense gratings, below which the pyres burn night and day. At each corner we see a raised funnel one foot and a half high. These are "the horns of the Altar," through which certain libations have to be poured, and which the priest touches with the blood of the victim, when making a sin-offering.

While this priest is preparing the sacrificial fires, the other priests—twelve at a time—are washing their hands and feet at the fountains of the great Brazen Laver. At a given signal, the priests reassemble in the Gazith, and lots are cast to determine the priests who are to offer the morning sacrifice, trim the Golden Candlestick, and prepare the Altar of Incense.

Those to whom these lots fall, hasten to accomplish their respective duties with the attendants they have chosen. The priest, who is to offer the sacrifice, has named the twelve men who stand nearest to him—for such is the custom. Now they proceed to draw the third lot. This is the most important of all, because it decides who is to enter the Holy Place and offer incense, and rarely does a priest perform this office twice in his lifetime. Indeed, only those who

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have never offered incense are allowed to draw the third lot. Finally, the fourth and last lot is drawn. This determines those who are to carry the pieces of the lamb to the Altar of Holocausts, place the meat-offering of the high priest upon the Altar, and (on ordinary days) pour out the libation ; but, as it is the great Sabbath, the high priest will perform this ceremony himself.

In the performance of these various duties, the night hours pass, and towards the close of the middle watch, the presiding priest sends some of his brethren to the top of one of the towers facing the East, there to watch for the faint light which announces that the dawn of day is at hand. While the watching priests strain their eyes, a reddish glow spreads over the horizon, and a few moments after the watchers proclaim that " the sky is lit up as far as Hebron."

On hearing this, the appointed priests hasten to fetch the ninety-four vessels of gold or silver used in offering the holocaust. Another company of priests goes to the lamb-room, near the Chamber of the Hearth. They examine, by torchlight, the lamb set apart for the morning oblation. It is a male, " without blemish," such as the Law requires. Little do these priests know that " the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world," has already been offered ; that the Victim now lies in the grave ; that the Precious Blood of Christ, " the Lamb unspotted and undefiled," has been poured out and accepted by the God of Israel !

Now the sacrificing priest gives the lamb water to drink from a golden bowl, and as we watch the lamb drinking, our thoughts revert to that scene which took place on Calvary a few hours previously. We seem to hear Jesus uttering His plaintive cry, " I thirst ! " We see the soldiers present Him with a sponge steeped in gall and vinegar.

The lamb has quenched its thirst, and now the priest drags it to the abattoir, on the north side of the Altar, where it is fastened to a ring fixed to a staple, and waits

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for the signal to kill it. Meanwhile, a priest, with his two attendants, bearing a golden dish and pitcher and the keys of the Holy Place, go up the twelve marble steps leading to the Porch in front of the House of the Lord. It is their office to trim the Golden Candlestick and to remove the ashes from the Altar of Incense. As the heavy doors of the Holy Place are unbarred, the priests blow their silver trumpets, thus giving the signal for slaying the lamb and for opening the Temple gates, where already a multitude of worshippers have assembled. The sacrificing priest cuts a deep gash in the lamb's throat, while his assistant catches the blood in a golden bowl, for "in the blood is the life" of the victim. Hence the sprinkling of the Altar with this blood is an essential part of the sacrifice. Around the upper section of the Altar of Holocausts, at a distance of a foot and a half from the top, a red line is painted. Presently the officiating priest will go up the inclined plane, and, standing at the north-western corner of the Altar, he will sprinkle the two sides of it *below* the line, then passing to the south-eastern angle he will do the same. If the sacrifice offered is a sin-offering, then the blood is sprinkled *above* the red fillet.

Once more our thoughts revert to Jesus hanging upon the Altar of the Cross. There He offered Himself as a holocaust, and likewise as *the* sin-offering for the world; therefore, fittingly were the two portions of the Cross—the staticulum and the antenna—sprinkled with the Precious Blood.

We will watch the priest as he slays the victim, cuts it up according to the prescribed ritual, and salts it, for has not Jehovah said: "Whatsoever sacrifice thou offerest, thou shalt season it with salt"?¹ For salt is a symbol of the perpetuity of the covenant of God with His people, as well as of incorruption, hence it was meet that the victim should be salted, which was a type of Him who could see

¹ Lev. ii. 13.

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no corruption, even though laid in a grave. The pieces are now hung up near the Altar upon the flesh-hooks in readiness for the actual offering of the victim. As this is "the great Sabbath," the morning service will commence later than usual, in order to allow the worshippers time to assemble.

All the gates are thronged, and the people silently and quickly take their Places in the various Courts—the men in the Court of Israel and in the Priests' Court ; the women in their Court and in the Gallery which surrounds it on three sides, whence they can see the smoke of the sacrifice ascending.

The proselytes occupy the Court of the Gentiles, and there King Herod and his retinue have their places reserved. How reverently all the worshippers stand before the House of the Lord ! Their heads are inclined, their arms extended or crossed over the breast, their lips move in prayer. Some—those who count themselves righteous—the Pharisees for example—prostrate themselves. Jews from all parts of the world and proselytes make up that vast multitude of some 210,000 worshippers. Hundreds of priests, white-robed and barefooted, are making the final preparation for the sacrifice ; reverently they move hither and thither within that part of the Inner Court which is reserved for those who officiate. Are these silent, reverent worshippers the men who, but a few hours ago, were heard clamouring for the condemnation of Jesus ? Did their shouts, "Crucify Him, crucify Him," rend the air ? Were they among the crowds that mocked our Redeemer on the cross and challenged Him to come down from it ? Yes, many of them are now present in the Temple of God ; they did indeed blaspheme the Incarnate Son of God, but in so doing, as our Lord Himself has told us, they knew not what they did, they even thought they were rendering service to God. Others, here present, though not consenting to His death, were powerless against the high-handed

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injustice of their spiritual rulers. He, whom they thus did to death, has prayed to His Father for their forgiveness.

In the midst of the tense silence of prayer and adoration a muffled sound is heard. It is Caiphas, the high priest, with his three attendants—all high officials, one on either side and one behind. The Levitical and priestly guards precede and open out the way. He is robed in plain white linen vestments, for only on the Day of Atonement may the high priest wear his distinctive garments. He advances from the robing-room, through the Court of Israel and that of the Priests, and takes his place close to the Altar of Holocausts. The officiating priests form a procession bearing the various parts of the victim, the blood of the lamb, the meat-offering, and the libation of wine, as well as the various implements and utensils required for the service. They go slowly up the inclined plane to the top circuit, followed by the high priest. Now Caiphas stands in full view of all in the upper courts. He takes the pieces of the sacrifice and flings them in confusion upon the grating, under which the pyres are burning brightly. Then he gathers them all together and arranges them as far as possible in their correct places, so as to form the exact outline of the lamb.

While Caiphas is ministering at the Altar of Holocausts, the appointed priest is seen, with his attendants, entering the Holy Place, carrying the live coals which he has taken from the small pyre and the incense for the sacrifice. The worshippers can see him, as he places the charcoal upon the golden Altar of Incense and arranges the incense upon it, since the hanging before the porch is looped back and the altar is placed lengthways in the Holy Place. Presently they perceive the smoke of the incense rising. Deep silence reigns, for it is the worship of sacrifice—that of praise will follow. Now the priests incline profoundly in the direction of the Holy of Holies, after which they withdraw, walking slowly backwards. This is the most solemn

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moment of the morning service. The priest, who has offered the incense, having reached the Vestibule, turns and faces the people. All the priests present take their places upon the twelve broad marble steps leading up to the Holy Place. Hundreds are gathered there on this great Sabbath. Hark, the silver trumpets sound forth again, and simultaneously all the priests, raising their hands as high as their shoulders, stretching out the fingers and touching their finger-tips, so as to form an arch before their faces, with downcast eyes pronounce the Aaronic blessing. How sweetly the solemn chant is wafted over the city as some five hundred priests chant in unison the sacred words of benediction !

“ The Lord bless thee and keep thee.

The Lord show His face to thee and have mercy upon thee.

The Lord turn His countenance to thee and give thee peace.”

Mercy and peace are indeed granted to all true Israelites, “ in whom there is no guile,” who reverently incline their heads to receive the priestly blessing, but to those who have persecuted the Just One, who have dealt deceitfully, for such—for the wicked—“ There is no peace, saith the Lord of Hosts.”

The chant has ceased, but still the worshippers remain silently adoring Jehovah in the one earthly fane where alone that sacred Name may be uttered. Now the stillness gives place to the clanging cymbals, which resound the moment a flag is unfurled and held aloft by a priestly attendant, who stands close to the Altar of Holocausts. This signal informs the congregation that the high priest Caiphas is pouring out the libation of wine at the base of the Altar of Holocausts. Does this ruddy stream remind him of the Blood which, by the hands of the executioners, he caused to flow forth from the pierced hands, feet, and side of Jesus ? We at least see the type and the reality and, in so doing, we are privileged, since so many were

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familiar with the types, but could not see whither those types and shadows pointed. Dare we assert that any one of that vast multitude gathered in the spacious Temple on that great Sabbath-day knew that the Redeemer of Israel had offered His one pure oblation? Mary, His Blessed Mother, alone knew that the Messiah had come and fulfilled all the types, but neither she nor the ministering women were in the Temple on this occasion. They had gazed upon the Crucified when He was dead, and prepared His Sacred Body for the grave, and this rendered them legally unclean for eight days, during which they might not enter the House of God.

Some devout Jews, especially those learned in the Law, knew that all the religious ceremonies in use were types of holier and better things, but not until the Feast of Pentecost was the full significance revealed to them, when multitudes of those who worshipped in the Temple during those Paschal solemnities, including many priests, "were obedient to the faith."

Now the musical portion of the service commences, for the Levites have heard the cymbals sound. The great choir occupy the fifteen circular steps leading from the Women's Court to the Court of Israel, and a raised platform in the centre of the Priests' Court. The singing boys—all sons of priests or Levites—are grouped together. With the men, they number some five hundred or more, for the great service of praise is chiefly executed by the human voice. Nevertheless, musical instruments are also in honour—especially on this great festival. How exquisitely the voices are wafted on the morning breezes to the accompaniment of numerous harps, lutes, trumpets, and flutes!

Listen to the words: they are singing the Sabbath Psalm. It is divided into three sections, after each of which the priests sound three blasts on their silver trumpets as a signal to the assembled congregation to worship the

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God of Israel in silence. How unspeakably solemn are these long pauses for adoration! These Jews are worshipping Jehovah—the Triune God—and in so doing, though they know it not, they are worshipping the Messias whom their rulers have crucified, and who now lies swathed in grave cloths in Joseph's tomb. They are worshipping their "unknown God," for he who worships the Father, worships also the Son and the Holy Ghost—the Holy and Undivided Trinity. What a profound mystery!

As the clear strong voices of the Levites chant the Sabbath Psalm in alternate choirs, we will join them in spirit and offer our homage "to the Lamb that was slain."

*A Psalm of a Canticle on the Sabbath-day.*¹

1. It is good to give praise to the Lord : and to sing to Thy Name, O most High.
2. To shew forth Thy mercy in the morning, and Thy truth in the night.
3. Upon an instrument of ten strings, upon the psaltery : with a canticle upon the harp.
4. For Thou hast given me, O Lord, a delight in Thy doings : and in the works of Thy hands I shall rejoice.
5. O Lord, how great are Thy works : Thy thoughts are exceeding deep.
Venite, adoremus !
7. The senseless man shall not know : nor will the fool understand these things.
8. When the wicked shall spring up as grass : and all the workers of iniquity shall appear.
9. That they may perish for ever and ever : but Thou, O Lord, art most high for evermore.
10. For behold thy enemies, O Lord, for behold Thy enemies shall perish : and all the workers of iniquity shall be scattered.
11. But my horn shall be exalted like that of the unicorn : and my old age in plentiful mercy.

¹ Psalm xcii.

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12. My eye also hath looked down upon my enemies : and my ear shall hear of the downfall of the malignant that rise up against me.

Venite, adoremus !

13. The just shall flourish like the palm-tree : he shall grow up like the cedar of Libanus.
14. They that are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of the house of our God.
15. They shall still increase in a fruitful old age : and shall be well treated.
16. That they may shew that the Lord our God is righteous, and there is no iniquity in Him.

Venite, adoremus !

To the devout Jews, the words of this psalm pointed to the millennial kingdom of the Messiah, when He should reign over all nations who should raise their song of glad thanksgiving and pay Him their homage. This was their fond expectation. As we listened to the sweet cadence of the sacred couplets (of which the second clause of each, supplemented or completed the thought expressed in the first), our thoughts were fixed on our crucified Saviour "the Just One," and His enemies, "the workers of iniquity." They indeed "have perished," but He is "most high for evermore." To-morrow, the first day of the week, will see the inauguration of that glorious reign.

The morning sacrifice has been offered ; the worshippers disperse, save those who have sacrifices to offer in obedience to the Law, or in fulfilment of their vows. All day long, even until the hour of the afternoon sacrifice, the Altar of Holocausts will be piled up with victims. As the multitudes pour forth from the numerous Temple exits, how many of them speak of Jesus of Nazareth ! It must needs be so, for One who had raised the dead and yet Himself had been put to death, One so mighty in word and deed, who had claimed to be the Son of God, must necessarily

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be the subject of their conversations. They speak, too, of the sudden mysterious darkness and the other signs. To show that all the worshippers in Jerusalem knew of the sufferings and death of Jesus, it suffices to quote the words of Cleophas addressed unconsciously to Jesus Himself: "Art thou a lonely stranger (*tu solus peregrinus es*) in Jerusalem and hast not known the things that have been done there in these days?"¹

There is so much to relate concerning Him. The inhabitants of Jerusalem, who were so hostile to Jesus, who compassed His death, speak contemptuously of "that seducer of the people" to their brethren of the Dispersion. The multitudes fulfilled the prophetic words of the psalmist: "They rejoiced against Me, and came together: my enemies rejoiced wrongfully over Me." . . . "They said: Well done, well done, our eyes have seen it." Some are perplexed—they know not what to think. A few stricken disciples—a mere handful compared with those vast multitudes—dare not speak in favour of the Crucified. But though these Jews blaspheme against Jesus, they nevertheless help to spread the tidings of His life and death among the pilgrims, and thus prepare the way for the promulgation of the Gospel. Their very animosity serves as an instrument in accomplishing God's permissive Will. It is often thus—were there no persecutors, there would be no martyrs.

The evening sacrifice brings back the devout worshippers. The order of the service is much the same and it is conducted by the incoming course of priests. Thus the Sabbath hours pass, and when sunset falls, the gates of the Temple will be closed, and that great first day of the week will commence in which our Emmanuel will rise triumphant from the grave and complete His victory over Sin and Death. Though the hours of waiting for our risen Saviour seem long, yet the promised vision "shall appear

¹ St. Luke xxiv. 18.

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at the end . . . it shall surely come and shall not be slack.”¹ Though our crucified Saviour still lies motionless in the tomb, yet “ There is His strength hid, Death shall go before His face, and the devil shall go before His feet. His brightness shall be as the light.” Then shall we be able to make the prophet’s words our own, “ I will rejoice in the Lord and I will joy in God, my Jesus.”²

¹ Hab. ii.

² *Idem* iii.

IV

PRODIGIES CONNECTED WITH THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

THE EARTHQUAKE ; THE APPARITION OF THE ANGEL TO THE
GUARDS ; THE RAISING TO LIFE OF MANY SAINTS

THOUGH no mortal witnessed the Resurrection of Jesus, yet it was speedily made known to many by the prodigies which accompanied or followed it. The earthquake, the presence of the angel, and the witness of the empty tomb revealed the fact of the Resurrection to the Roman guards, and through them, to the chief priests and ancients—to the whole Sanhedrin. The angelic messengers informed the ministering women that their Lord had risen from the grave, and the saints, who were raised to life on Easter Day, communicated this information to the “many” to whom they appeared, and these in their turn, like the holy women, became witnesses to the Resurrection of Jesus. Inanimate nature, angelic spirits, souls from Hades raised from death, human beings upon the earth—both friends and foes of our Lord—all contributed to make known His glorious victory obtained over death.

Thus it had been at His birth, which was made known to men by the miraculous star, that led the Magi to His manger ; by the angels’ message to the shepherds, who spread the glad tidings, so that all “who heard wondered at those things that were told them.”¹ Herod also, though unwittingly, helped to spread the glad tidings of

¹ St. Luke ii. 18.

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the Messiah's birth, when being "troubled," "all Jerusalem" feared "with him," and through this enemy of the Divine Infant, the news reached "all the chief priests and the scribes of the people," whom Herod assembled in order to ascertain "where Christ should be born."¹ It was fitting that our Lord's Birth and Resurrection should be heralded by *Nature, men, and angels.*

St. Matthew alone relates the incidents of the earthquake and the apparition of an angel to the guards. He writes: "Behold, there was a great earthquake. For an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and coming rolled back the stone and sat upon it. And his countenance (better, his appearance) was as lightning, and his raiment as snow, and for fear of him, the guards were struck with terror, and became as dead men."²

"Behold!" The Evangelist calls our attention to the unexpectedness of the incident. But a moment before, all was tranquil, some of the guards sleeping, others watching, and darkness still covered the land. Then in the twinkling of an eye, a rumbling sound was heard—"the earth shook and trembled," "the foundations of the mountain were moved."³ But instead of a deeper veil of darkness covering the earth, the whole scene was lit up as with lightning, when the angel of God rolled away the stone from the sepulchre, and seated himself upon it.

The watching guards—proud Roman soldiers accustomed to the din of battle and the enraged onset of their foes—were overcome with fear when brought into contact with this messenger from the supernatural world. Those who were sleeping awoke instantly, and all—pallid with fear—fell to the earth and lay prone there as "dead men." Sheer physical terror alone would have made them tremble, for the bravest are overawed by "a great earthquake, but to this natural motive for terror was added a supernatural one. From the majestic countenance of the angel, lightning

¹ St. Matt. ii. 4.

² *Ibid.*, xxviii. 2.

³ 2 Kings xxii. 8.

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seemed to flash. Brave as these soldiers were in the thick of earth's combats, they could not resist the presence of a heavenly messenger. We know not how long they lay prostrate, but when their swoon came to an end, as they gradually recovered consciousness, they must have remembered all they had heard of the mighty deeds of the Prophet of Galilee, the prodigies of Good Friday, the predictions of His Resurrection of the third day—and that they were keeping the first watch of this very day.—All this came forcibly before them, and panic-stricken, in abject terror they fled from the garden.

What happened afterwards? As far as we can judge from the Gospel narrative, as soon as they had recovered a little from their fright, they returned to the sepulchre. During their absence (or as some commentators think, while they lay fainting on the ground) the first of the different groups of women arrived at the grave, saw the stone rolled away, received the angel's message, and departed to communicate the joyful news to their companions. Then the terrified guards having summoned up courage, returned and examined the sepulchre. They looked for the sacred Body, which they had been commissioned to guard, but found It not—the tomb was empty, only the grave cloths remained there—a circumstantial evidence to the fact of the Resurrection. If these Roman soldiers would not or could not endorse the angel's words "He is risen," they could confirm the first part of the angelic message: "He is not here." Of this they had assured themselves, by thoroughly examining the sepulchre. We may conclude that, while they were so doing, the angel was no longer visible. Having concluded their search and convinced themselves that since no body remained for them to guard, there was no further need for them to remain. Hence the captain, taking with him some of the men to give their corroboration of his story, went to the chief priests.

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St. Matthew thus relates this incident : “ Some of the guards came into the city and told the chief priests all things that had been done.” These chief priests were, in their turn, terrified. “ Had He really risen ? ” they asked each other, as their faces blanched with fear. They saw how panic-stricken these guards were, and knew that some great event must have happened—they did not question the truth of the soldiers’ narrative. In vain had these rulers flattered themselves that they had succeeded in ridding themselves of Jesus of Nazareth ; in vain had they exclaimed “ Well done, well done, our eyes have seen it.” All their latent fears were aroused. He had said that He would rise again on the third day, and early on this very day, these guards had brought word that the grave was empty. Once more the prophetic words were realised : “ The sinners in Sion are afraid . . . trembling hath seized upon the hypocrites.”

The situation was grave ! What was to be done ? Instantly, they convoked an assembly of the Sanhedrin, and among them probably Joseph and Nicodemus attended. What an intense look of fear and anxiety the countenances of our Lord’s enemies and murderers revealed ? How eagerly they inquired why they had been thus so hurriedly and unexpectedly convoked. What a deep, tense silence reigned while the guards related all that had taken place as far as they knew it. There was no gainsaying their story—they spoke with intense conviction, their testimony was unanimous.

Then the soldiers were told to retire while the Sanhedrin deliberated. Their plan was soon made—a lying report must be propagated, and to this end they would bribe the soldiers. But the guards were numerous—there were sixteen of them—hence “ a large sum of money ” was required to purchase their silence and connivance. It was in keeping with their previous conduct that those rulers of Israel had no scruple about taking this hush-money from

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the Treasury of the Lord, and bolstering up a lie with the alms offered by the devout for the service of the sanctuary. From that Treasure chest they had taken the money to pay Judas for his treachery—a *small* sum in his case, but which nevertheless sufficed to secure his co-operation. Thus, for the second time, money played its part in connection with the incidents of the Passion, and each time as a determining factor for wrongdoing. How often in the history of humanity it has played a like ignoble part! How many thousands are still bound with its golden chains!

Having come to a decision, the Sanhedrists recalled the guards, and, handing over to them "the great sum of money," they laid down their conditions: "Say you: His disciples came by night and stole Him away when we were asleep, and if the governor shall hear of this, we will persuade him and secure you." The bait was tempting—there lay the great sum of money. It could be theirs in return for circulating a base calumny. Doubtless those guards did not hesitate. After all, their lives were at stake, should the governor come to know that the Body of Jesus, which they were charged to guard carefully, had been removed, and they knew not how or when this had come to pass. True, their very lie imperilled their lives also, for the Roman soldier who slept during his watch incurred the death penalty. There was danger ahead whichever way they looked, so thinking that in all probability Pontius Pilate would never trouble about the matter, and knowing that it was the chief priests' interest not to betray them, they accepted the money and took the risk—less guilty than those sanctimonious Sanhedrists, who counselled this iniquitous course and seconded their advice with a bribe. The chief priests had succeeded once more and, as St. Augustine remarks: "That avarice which overcame Judas, the companion of Christ, also overcame the soldiers who guarded the sepulchre."

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Yet it was a lying story which contradicted itself, for had the guards fallen asleep, how could they know that the disciples had stolen the Body of Jesus? If they were awake, why did they not prevent the theft? Could a few unarmed disciples have offered any effective resistance to armed soldiers, even if the former had made any such attempt? Would these disciples have taken the trouble to unswathe the limbs of the dead Body? What advantage would it have been to them to take away the dead body, seeing that Jesus had been honourably interred? Moreover, after the third day—supposing that He had not really risen—they could have had free access to the tomb? Clumsily as the story was invented, it attained the proposed end, for “they, taking the money, did as they were taught.” What was the result of this piece of deception? Like most lies, it had a certain success, for St. Matthew adds: “This word was spread among the Jews even unto this day,” and the Evangelist penned these words fifteen years after our Lord’s Ascension.

On their side, the rulers trusted the success of their lie to Pilate’s indifference and weakness of character. What would it matter to the Governor of Judea what had become of the dead body of a criminal! He would never inquire into the question. If Jesus of Nazareth had indeed risen, He would not again walk the streets of Jerusalem in His natural Body and appearance, since, according to the Jewish teachers, after the resurrection, the souls dwelt in a spiritual body, so the Nazarene would never appear to give the lie to their tale. Thus these Sanhedrists argued, as they again strove to persuade themselves that all was “well done,” seeing that the soldiers had accepted the bribe and given the required promise of secrecy as to the true course of events.

Did the guards’ story ever reach the ears of Pilate? Eusebius, who wrote early in the third century—less than two hundred years later—states explicitly that it did, and

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that Pilate informed Tiberius Cæsar of the fact. Eusebius writes: "The fame of our Lord's remarkable resurrection and ascension being now spread abroad, according to an ancient custom prevalent among the rulers of the nations, to communicate novel occurrences to the emperor—that nothing might be unknown to him—Pilate transmitted to Tiberius¹ an account of the circumstances concerning the Resurrection of our Lord from the dead, the report of which had already been spread throughout Palestine."²

Thus God made known the glorious truth of the Resurrection even to the enemies of His Son. The pagan guards were certainly allowed to see the Angel, since it was "for fear of him" that they "were struck with terror." The earthquake alone would not have terrified these Roman soldiers so much, for they must have witnessed others previously. True, this was "a great earthquake," though probably not the result of any special intervention of Divine Power with the laws of Nature. Still, the conjunction of the circumstances which had preceded and those that followed, gave it a certain supernatural character. God had so timed the earthquake that it should be like a royal trumpet, proclaiming the greatest event that had ever taken place on earth. Cornelius à Lapede remarks that "the earth, which trembled with horror at the death of Christ, leaped with joy at His Resurrection."

Again, the earthquake naturally inspired fear. Even Christians look upon this fearful scourge as a visitation, and pagans have always considered earthquakes as portents

¹ Since the Crucifixion took place *circa* A.D. 31 and Tiberius died in A.D. 37, it follows that the news came to the Emperor's ears within some five or six years of the event. As the knowledge of the Resurrection was widely spread abroad at Pentecost, we must restrict St. Matthew's statement that "the story (*i.e.* of the theft of Christ's body) was spread among the Jews," to those who did not accept the testimony of the Apostles, and the unbelieving Jews far exceeded numerically those who became Christians.

² Bk. II. ch. ii.

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of some terrible, universal calamity, or a proof of the anger of the gods. In the sacred Scriptures earthquakes are frequently referred to as signs of the presence of Jehovah, who "looketh upon the earth, and maketh it tremble."¹

The terror which the guards experienced in consequence of the earthquake, was increased by the mysterious events which had accompanied our Lord's death on Good Friday, and the fact that they were keeping watch at this midnight hour over the grave of One, who indubitably had raised the dead and had predicted that, on the third day, He Himself would rise again. Even before the earth trembled, we can quite realise that inexpressible, eerie, weird forebodings of some superhuman exhibition of power must have oppressed these Roman soldiers. And their apprehensions were more than realised when the angel, descending "from Heaven, . . . rolled back the stone" from the sepulchre "and sat upon it."

We may gather some faint idea of the terror which seized the guards, from the narration of the vision of an angel to the prophet Daniel, who thus describes the apparition and its effects :

"I saw a man, clothed in linen, and his loins girded with the finest gold. His body was like to chrysolite (*i.e.* topaz) and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as a burning lamp : and his arms and all downward, even to the feet, like in appearance to glittering brass, and the voice of his word, like the voice of a multitude. I, Daniel, alone saw the vision, for the men that were with me saw it not, but an exceeding great terror fell upon them, and they fled away, and hid themselves. And I being left alone saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me . . . and I fainted away."²

If the holy prophet of God thus "fainted away" when he had a vision of a glorious angel, no wonder that these heathen soldiers "became as dead men." We may here

¹ Ps. ciii. 32.

² Dan. x. 5.

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ask reverently why God allowed these guards to see the angel, whereas the companions of Daniel were not permitted to gaze upon the vision.

Several reasons have been given, the chief being that God willed these Roman guards should bear testimony to the Resurrection of Jesus, and that, through them, the chief priests and ancients should learn that our Lord's predictions concerning His Resurrection had been fulfilled. These bitter enemies of Christ would not have accepted the testimony of Joseph of Arimathea nor of Nicodemus, both of whom were members of the Sanhedrin. Still less would they have accepted the evidence of the disciples of Jesus. But when these Roman soldiers related their story, the rulers could not gainsay such collective, unanimous, and circumstantial testimony. Moreover, it was against the guards' interest to relate what had happened, and the empty tomb corroborated their statements. Therefore, through the apparition of the angel to the guards, the enemies of Christ learned that He had fulfilled His prediction by rising on the third day. They learned then that all their wicked plots had ultimately failed, and perhaps the words of the Psalmist recurred to their minds as, terrified and panic-stricken, they listened to the guards' story: "He that dwelleth in heaven shall laugh at them, and the Lord shall deride them."¹

How eagerly Joseph and Nicodemus—secret disciples of Jesus—listened to these soldiers! It confirmed their weak faith and gave them confidence. As regards the inveterate foes of Jesus, far from bringing them to repentance, it seems to have confirmed them in their obstinacy and blindness.

Another effect or motive of the vision was to manifest the power of God. When the prophet of Galilee raised Lazarus from the tomb, human hands rolled away the stone to give means of exit to a natural body, which was destined to die a second time. When the Incarnate Son

¹ Ps. ii. 4.

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of God conquered Death, a glorious angel descended from heaven and rolled away the stone from the sepulchre, not to give Him exit, but to allow men to see that His Body was not in the tomb.

Thirdly, the soldiers were allowed to see the angel, in order that they might not interfere with the ministering women and the disciples who went to visit the sepulchre. As the men were either prostrate on the ground in a death-like swoon or had precipitously taken flight, they could not prevent the holy women from entering the sepulchre and receiving the angel's message, nor could they accuse any particular person of having removed our Lord's Body.

While the rulers of Israel were plotting to explain away the clear evidence of facts, many in the Holy City were receiving supernatural communications concerning the Resurrection of Jesus, for St. Matthew relates that "the graves were opened, and many bodies of the saints that slept arose, and coming out of the tombs after His resurrection, came into the holy city and appeared to many."¹ The Evangelist connects the resurrection of these just with the death of our Lord, but in so doing, he anticipates the event, as he expressly states that these saints came out of their tombs "*after His resurrection.*" The Jews generally hewed their sepulchres out of the live rock without the city walls. The opening of the graves resulted from the earthquake, which dislodged the stones placed at the entrance to the sepulchres. Now that Christ had "risen from the dead, the first fruits of them that slept,"²—"the first-born from the dead,"³—it was meet that these saints should rise. It is the opinion of the most modern commentators that they rose with glorified bodies, and that they ascended body and soul with Him on Ascension Day, as trophies won from death by the Lord of Life. It does not seem probable that death regained his empire over these saints' bodies. We can contemplate the scene in spirit.

¹ St. Matt. xxvii. 52.

² 1 Cor. xv. 20.

³ Col. i. 18.

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From the vast cemetery which encircled Jerusalem—for none might be buried in the Holy City—"many" saints came forth with their bodies. Angels guarded the sepulchres of these saints and watched over their ashes. Some had died in ages long past, such as Adam, Eve, Abraham, David, the prophets and kings of Israel. Others had lived during our Lord's lifetime—for example, St. Joseph, St. John the Baptist, holy Simeon, Anna, St. Elizabeth, and St. Joachim. It is generally believed that those who rose were those holy souls who had typified Christ or helped to make Him known during their lives. These "saints" had seen Jesus in Hades, and on that glorious Easter morning He had completed their happiness by again uniting their souls with their bodies. These saints were the first whose bodies were raised glorious, and, *as far as we know*, the only beings who now enjoy this privilege in heaven.

From the many tombs that were opened, these saints rose and came forth, unseen by mortals, except by those to whom they were appointed to appear. God had a work for them on earth—they were to be the witnesses to Christ's Resurrection, the living proofs of His victory over death—that "strong man armed" who has so long kept his court in peace. These saints thus wrested from his long firm grasp, proved that One, stronger than He, had overcome him, taken away the "armour wherein he trusted" and distributed "his spoils."¹ Further, these glorified saints were a pledge of the glorious resurrection of all the just at the last day. Thus in a special manner, they were the heralds and the living witnesses to His having risen.

How terrified at first must those have been, to whom they manifested themselves, and what joy followed when the supernatural visitants were recognised! Only those worthy of such a favour were visited by these saints, and the effect of their apparition was to give men faith in the

¹ St. Luke xi. 21.

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Resurrection—to prepare some chosen witnesses to this truth. When the Apostles went forth to preach this fundamental doctrine, there were “many” who could corroborate their teaching by the testimony of those “that had slept” and whom God had raised up again to be His messengers.

These saints came into the Holy City. Guilty as the Jewish rulers and people were, still it was the Sion of God’s choice. There He had willed that His Temple should be raised, there humanity was redeemed. We, too, when the time comes, appointed by God, hope to wing our flight to the Heavenly Jerusalem, there to join the multitude which no man can number, and by our very presence there bear our witness to the infinite patience and love of God, to the power of His Resurrection.

Meanwhile we have, each and all, a very real mission to accomplish on earth. Like the just of the Old Law, we must live as “pilgrims and strangers” upon earth, practising those virtues which befit men who seek “a better, that is to say a heavenly country.” Then will it be truthfully said of us, as of those who looked forward to the first coming of Christ: “God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He hath prepared for them a country.”¹

O blessed saints who were privileged to be the heralds of our Redeemer’s Resurrection and who now adore Him in heaven, pray for us that we may so bear witness to Him during our life’s pilgrimage, that we may one day hear those blessed words of welcome: “Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.”

SUMMARY FOR MEDITATION

First Prelude.—Visit the sepulchre of Jesus in spirit during the third night-watch “on the first day of the week.” Consider the earthquake, the apparition of the angel, the raising to life of the saints.

¹ Heb. xi. 13 *et seq.*

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Second Prelude.—Pray that you, by leading a supernatural life, may always bear living witness to the Resurrection.

First Point.—By the earthquake, the apparition, and the empty tomb, the Roman guards are taught that Christ had risen again. They fear and fall prone “as dead men.”

Second Point.—The guards recovered from their swoon and went to tell the chief priests and ancients what had happened. God thus informed these enemies of Christ of the Resurrection and revealed His power.

Third Point.—Many of the just arose from the dead and, appearing in the Holy City, were witnesses to the Resurrection of Jesus. We, too, are called to be living witnesses to this truth by our Christian lives.

Colloquy.—Pray for firm faith in the great mysteries taught by the Church. Ask that the love of money or temporal interests may never lead you astray. Pray that you may never counsel others to sin. Ask that in your daily life you may bear witness to the Risen Saviour by practising the virtue of detachment. Invoke the saints who were raised on Easter Day, and ask that you may hereafter be associated with them in glory everlasting.

“SITTING OVER AGAINST THE SEPULCHRE”

“There was in the place where He was crucified a garden, and in the garden, a new sepulchre, wherein no man had yet been laid.”—
ST. JOHN XIX. 41.

“Come and see the place where the Lord was laid.”—ST. MATT.
XXVIII. 6.

“Certain women affrighted us . . . not finding His body.”—
ST. LUKE XXIV. 22.

WHILE the panic-stricken guards have fled to announce to the chief priests what had happened at the tomb, and the holy women have not as yet reached the garden, let us reverently take up our station by our Redeemer's empty grave. We will accept the angel's gracious invitation and, “sitting over against the sepulchre,” meditate on this wondrous mystery of the Resurrection and beg our Risen Saviour to deign to manifest Himself to our longing souls. “Thou that dwellest in the gardens, the friends hearken; make me hear Thy voice.” “Lord, it is good for us to be here”—here in this garden,” and yet “How terrible is this place!” “This is no other but the house of God and the gate of heaven.”¹ “Indeed the Lord is in this place!” and “the angels of God” may be seen “ascending and descending by it.” Still, we may remain here without fear, for the angelic message is given to all the faithful disciples of Jesus.

The angel in his majesty sits motionless near the sepulchre on the right side, clothed in a white garment, guarding the

¹ Gen. xxviii. *passim*.

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Royal Tomb. His countenance turns no lightning flashes upon His King's faithful subjects. Though the angelic sentinel is clothed "in shining apparel," we may venture to take our stand quite close to the untenanted grave. If we invoke his powerful intercession, that majestic angel will assist us in our contemplation and obtain for us some spiritual light which, by enlightening our intelligence and strengthening our will, may help us to walk in newness of life, as befits those who have risen with Christ. Blessed angel of the Resurrection, intercede for us and reveal to our yearning souls the great lessons of this mystery; bring us likewise a message from our Risen Lord, which shall prepare us to receive His visit.

We will take up our place close by the sepulchre, just where we can see into the chamber. All is lit up by the presence of the angel, who is seated upon the stone within the vestibule. We perceive the tomb and the grave cloths. Silence reigns around us; the day has not yet dawned. Darkness still envelops the earth—only the empty sepulchre is illumined. We are "with Him in the garden," though we see Him not; we can commune with Him in the silence and solitude of loving contemplation.

There was a garden, and in the garden a sepulchre. Our thoughts revert to that "Paradise of pleasure," planted by the Creator in the beginning. *In that garden there was no sepulchre*, for it was the type of the eternal home of the redeemed, "where death shall be no more, nor mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow shall be any more, for the former things have passed away."¹ All delights were in the terrestrial Paradise. In the middle was the tree of life, of which he who ate the fruit would never have tasted death. But our first parents sinned, and thereby incurred the penalty of death. Lest they should "take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever," they were sent out of "the paradise of pleasure": at the gate, Cherubim were

¹ Apoc. xxi. 4.

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placed to bar the entrance, “ and a flaming sword, turning every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.”¹ Here, in Joseph of Arimathea’s garden, Jesus, the Lord of Life, has rested for a brief moment in the sleep of death. Angels keep watch over His empty tomb, as they guarded the entrance to Paradise. Thanks be to God, no cherubim prevent our entering this garden, no flaming sword is turned against those who seek Jesus. On the contrary, the angels invite us to enter, and give us the joyful news that He is not there for He is risen. The guards have been driven away, that the disciples may enter freely.

There was a garden and in the garden a sepulchre. It must needs be so, since *man has incurred the penalty of death through his sin*: this garden with its empty sepulchre would have no reason to be, had man not needed a Redeemer. But as sin was committed in Eden and man fell there from the friendship of God, so in this garden the reparation has been completed. In Paradise, humanity received its charter for the grave—given to each human being at his birth—in Joseph’s garden Jesus set the seal to man’s Redemption, whereof the pledge is given to each one over whom the baptismal waters flow. Though we are not exempt from death, we have the assurance of a glorious resurrection, since our Redeemer is “ the first-fruits of them that sleep.”

It was in a garden that Eve sinned and God’s curse fell upon the human race. Years and years of untold sorrows had weighed down the children of men in consequence. But the moment appointed for fulfilling the Messianic promises, made in the Paradise of pleasures, came at last on that Easter morning, when the angels first made known to the holy women, the joyful news that the seed of the woman had indeed crushed the serpent’s head—that Jesus was truly risen and death was swallowed up in victory. The faithful women were likewise privileged to hear “ the

¹ Gen. iii. 23-4.

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voice of the Lord God walking in Paradise," and to be sent to the Apostles as the messengers of the Risen Saviour. Contrast the two scenes and gaze down into the depths of the abyss that separates them—Adam and Eve cast forth weeping from Paradise and cherubim guarding the entrance with a flaming sword—the ministering women, hastening with joy from the garden to carry the glad news that the Saviour had risen, and that the kingdom of heaven was henceforth open to all believers. How little even these privileged messengers realised the true, far-reaching significance of the message they conveyed to the Apostles!

It was *in a garden* that the sentence of death was pronounced. "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return to the earth, out of which thou wast taken, for dust thou art and into dust shalt thou return."¹ Long ages sped on their course, and every child of Adam had owned Death's sway. His scythe, ever at work, had gone on reaping generation after generation. Not a human being had escaped except Henoeh, who "was translated, that he should not see death,"² and Elias, who "went up by a whirlwind into heaven,"³ but it is generally believed they will return again to earth, towards the end of the world and be martyred, for commentators identify the "two witnesses," mentioned in the Apocalypse, with Henoeh and Elias. During the course of long ages, a few were called back to life by the power of God, but they had to yield again to the grim tyrant's sway. Moreover, Death *retained* all his victims, until that Easter Day, when Jesus snatched the sceptre from his hand by rising from the grave Himself, and by raising to life "many of them that slept." As Death gained his empire in a garden, so it was in a garden that he lost it for ever.

In the garden a tomb. It is the spring season and in Joseph's garden the flowers are springing up. Nature teems with life and the landscape is fair to gaze upon.

¹ Gen. iii. 19.

² Heb. xi. 5.

³ 4 Kings ii. 11.

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Yet, in the midst of this exuberance of life, we find a tomb—the emblem of death. Is there any real incongruity between life and death? Not if we look below the surface. These flowers in all their beauty could never have sprung up to gladden our eyes, if the seeds planted had not seen corruption, that the germ might expand. It is thus with the bodies of men, as St. Paul so beautifully explains in his first Epistle to the Corinthians—in that passage which has consoled so many thousands of mourners—that the human body “is sown in corruption, it shall rise in incorruption. It is sown in dishonour, it shall rise in glory. It is sown in weakness, it shall rise in power. It is sown a natural body, it shall rise a spiritual body.”¹ The garden flowers blooming on all sides remind us that death is but “a planting” for the Christian. The Holy One, who saw no corruption, has risen “to die no more,” and if “we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall also in the likeness of His resurrection.”² With joy, can we appropriate St. Paul’s exultant challenge to King Death: “O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?” Henceforth we can look calmly upon every tenanted tomb and our own untenanted grave, for if the sight of a cemetery—the *sleeping place* of our loved ones—suggests thoughts of death, it is but of death as a prelude to a truer and a lasting life.

A garden, and in the garden a new sepulchre, in which Jesus, “the lily of the valleys,” remained for three days. He lay dead in the tomb—the lily among the thorns—His sacred face still bearing the marks of the crown, which the soldiers had placed upon His head. Here He rested “on the bed of aromatical spices,” the gift of loving disciples. Here His faithful disciples keep watch throughout the Easter vigil, and from their souls rises the yearning cry: “Have you seen Him, whom my soul loveth?”³

A garden close to that hallowed garden of Gethsemani,

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 42.

² Rom. vi. 5.

³ Cant. iii. 3.

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in which He commenced His sacred Passion. In Gethsemani His all-holy Soul was "sorrowful even unto death," and He longed for human sympathy and intercession, He desired and even implored His Apostles to remain near and watch with Him, while He wrestled with the powers of darkness. In Joseph's garden He sleeps in peace; the conflict has been fought and won, nevertheless He would have us watch here, waiting for the first rays of that blessed Easter morning, when He rose, never to die again.

In the garden a new sepulchre. None had ever rested there before, none after. Joseph of Arimathea had made that grave for himself and his family, little thinking that he was preparing a royal tomb for his Redeemer. How often it happens in life that we prepare something for ourselves—for our own enjoyment or for those dear to us. We were so glad to prepare our children's future either materially or spiritually. We strove hard that they should lack nothing which we could provide, and then one day the message came, "The Lord hath need of it." The wrench was terrible, but could we have looked ahead and seen how the unerring foresight of God plans out all that concerns each one of His children, we should have been resigned, if not glad to make Him this offering, in spite of the suffering—often continued through long, weary years—which it entailed.

In the garden a new sepulchre, the only tomb ever tenanted by a Sinless One. Another sinless one—our blessed Lady—will for a few short hours occupy a sepulchre; but when Jesus lay in the sepulchre, never in the world's history had a grave received a human being who was not a sinner. Sin has opened every tomb—our sin opened Joseph's tomb to our Redeemer. It is because we are sinners that we are Death's legitimate captives—Christ alone was "free among the dead"—free to lay down His life, free to take it up again as and when He willed.

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In the garden, a new sepulchre lent by Joseph to the Galilean prophet. It was fitting that Jesus should have but a *borrowed* grave, seeing that He would need one for so short a time. He could have none by right, since He was the Sinless One. Therefore He accepted this loan—a proof of Joseph’s love and fidelity—as, indeed, He ever deigns to accept our offerings, small though they be even in our eyes. Little did Joseph dream that the resting-place which he had offered to the Crucified would be, in the course of ages, the spot towards which millions of pilgrims would converge. This borrowed grave was given to the Church for all time. Our Saviour’s poverty, too, exacted a borrowed grave. He who had “not where to lay His head” could make no provision for a burying-place, and God provided one by means of a faithful disciple.

In the garden, a sepulchre guarded by angels. They kept watch over our Saviour’s Body and over the place where It had lain. By resting there He made that tomb a sacred shrine. He hallowed it as He hallowed every place where He sojourned. Palestine is “the Holy Land” because He trod its dust. He hallows, also, the grave of every Christian; He will hallow mine. How many millions throughout long centuries have accepted the angel’s invitation: “Come and see the place where the Lord lay!” That hallowed sepulchre of Jesus was guarded during the Easter vigil by angels, friends and foes, and thus it has been ever since. Men have given their lives to preserve it intact, to rescue it from profanation. The very efforts, made by the inveterate enemies of Christianity to obliterate this hallowed landmark, have but served to mark the site. Hadrian’s monuments, erected to desecrate Calvary and the Holy Sepulchre, made known to Constantine their exact positions. Thus men overreach themselves when fighting against God.

The Holy Sepulchre! How sacred it is to all Christians! As a well-known author has aptly said: “No

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other spot on the surface of this earth can equally rouse Christian interest. Rome and Athens have glories all their own : they say much to the historical imagination ; but they say little by comparison to all that is deepest in our nature—little to the conscience, little to the heart. Sinai and Horeb, Lebanon and Hermon, Hebron and Bethel . . . have high claims on Jews and Christians from their place in the history and books of the chosen people ; but dearer still to us Christians are Bethlehem and Nazareth, and Jericho and Bethany, and Tabor and the Hill of the Beatitudes, and Bethsaida and Capernaum, and Gethsemani and Calvary ; and yet the interest even of these must pale before that which attracts us to the Tomb of Jesus. When, in the Middle Ages, the flower of European chivalry, and amongst them our own King Richard, set forth on that succession of enterprises which we know as the Crusades, the special object which roused Europe to this great and prolonged effort was the deliverance, not so much of the Holy Land but the Holy Sepulchre from the rule of the infidel ; and when a Christian in our day finds himself in the Holy City, what is it to which his eager steps first and naturally turn ? There is . . . one spot compared with which the site of the Temple itself is insignificant : he must take the advice of the Angel of the Sepulchre, . . . he must “ see the place where the Lord lay.”¹ Truly, Jesus hallows every spot where He rests ; He hallows my soul and body by His Eucharistic presence. They, likewise, are sacred shrines *watched over by angels, consecrated by His Presence.*

In the garden a sepulchre now empty, since “ He is not here ; He is risen as He said.” Joseph’s sepulchre is now untenanted—it is as empty as all earth’s graves will be on that day which was shown to St. John in prophetic vision—when “ the angel, standing upon the sea and upon the earth ” with his hand uplifted to Heaven, shall swear by Him that liveth for ever, that “ time shall be no longer.”²

¹ Canon Liddon.

² Apoc. x. 6.

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We wander round a graveyard ; we look at the tombstones and note the dates they bear. Some, whose bodies occupy these tombs, died two or three hundred years ago. We can scarcely decipher the exact year. Some were buried a few years ago—we knew them well. Others were but recently interred—yonder the sexton is preparing a fresh grave. We look at the massive monuments and we think of what they conceal—the ashes of generations—and the thought comes to us that all these graves without exception, will one day be empty. Angels will roll away the stones and the dead shall come forth. The dead have but the *lease* of their tombs, they are not freeholders. Meanwhile, angels keep guard over these graves. What a consolation for those who mourn a wife, a husband, a loved child ! God will give them back, their graves will not always be closed and tenanted, for by faith we know that the dead shall rise. Therefore, we do not mourn for the faithful departed, as those who have no hope, since

“Our own are our own for ever, God taketh not back His gift ;
They may pass beyond our vision, but our soul shall find them
out,
When the waiting is all accomplished, and the deathly
shadows lift,
And the glory is given for mourning, and the surety of God for
doubt.”

Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory over sin and death. Thanks be to our Redeemer for the blessed lessons taught by His Resurrection. As surely as He has risen, so surely will the day come wherein “all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that have done good things shall come forth unto the resurrection of life.”¹ That day must come, wherein the sea—the largest of earth’s cemeteries—“shall give up its dead,” and death shall be no more for the just. This

¹ St. John v. 28.

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blessed hope is a source of strength, it is "the power of the Resurrection" which brings home to us our responsibilities. Since we shall all rise again to confront the deeds done in the flesh, it behoves us to walk circumspectly. It is this hope of the resurrection of man which explains the mystery of the inequalities of human lives, of suffering, of injustice, and of death. In the life to come, there will be ample compensation for all earth's tribulations. Therefore, we can at the hour of death make the sacrifice of our lives, knowing that since our Redeemer ever lives, we too, clothed again in the flesh, shall rise to a life of immortality and enter into the joy of our Lord.

SUMMARY OF MEDITATION

First Prelude.—Take up your stand near the empty sepulchre of Jesus. Within, seated upon a stone, is the Angel of the Resurrection. His presence lights up the tomb.

Second Prelude.—Ask that you may learn the consoling lessons which the empty sepulchre conveys.

First Point.—"There was a garden." Note the contrasts:

In Eden there were no tombs, in this garden one new sepulchre.

In Eden, Eve ruined the human race; here Jesus sealed the work of Redemption.

In the paradise of pleasures, a woman conveyed news of the fall of man; here a woman announces the joyful news that the reparation is completed.

In the first garden Death triumphed; in Joseph's garden, he was overthrown. Death is but the condition of a newer and more perfect life.

In Joseph's garden, the work begun in Gethsemani was completed.

Second Point.—A *sepulchre* in a garden. Note that it was:

1. A new sepulchre—made for Man, used by the Man-God.

“Sitting over against the Sepulchre”

2. A sepulchre, and the only one tenanted by a Sinless Being.
3. A borrowed tomb. Jesus needed no other, nor do we in reality.
4. A hallowed grave, watched over by angels.
5. An empty grave, as one day all graves will be tenantless.

Colloquy.—Thank our Blessed Lord for having gained the victory over Death for you. Ask that you may accept death with resignation and even joy. Pray for a firm hope in the resurrection—one that will strengthen you in your hour of trial and convince you that, however trials may overwhelm you here in the arena of life, still—

“All is right that seems most wrong,
If it be His sweet Will.”

VI

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

“ The third day, He rose again from the dead.”

“ Haec dies, quam fecit Dominus, exultemus et laetemur in ea. Alleluia.”

THE Evangelists give neither details nor description of our Lord's rising from the grave. St. Mark says simply that Jesus, “ *rising early the first day of the week,*” appeared to Mary Magdalene. This is the only reference to the *time* of our Lord's Resurrection. The exact hour when it took place is not specified. St. Luke's words confirmed St. Mark's, when he tells that when the ministering women “ came to the sepulchre—bringing the spices which they had prepared ”—“ on the first day of the week *very early* in the morning, they found not the body of the Lord Jesus ”—the tomb was already empty. St. Matthew announces the fact by giving the angel's testimony: “ He is not here; He is risen, as He said.”

Still, if prayerfully and reverently we examine the words of the sacred Gospels and the prodigies which accompanied or followed the Resurrection of Jesus, we may, to a certain extent, penetrate the veil and, by grasping the inner meaning of these revealed truths, nourish our souls and thus advance in virtue. Just as the exquisite beauties of Nature are revealed by a powerful microscope, so the clear eye of faith, aided by the Holy Spirit, fathoms something of those wondrous spiritual truths which eternity alone will reveal in all their fulness. Origen, in his Epistle to the Romans

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(ch. 1.), tells us that nothing "is empty or insignificant with God," and St. Irenaeus says: "The sacred Scriptures contain nothing that is useless" (Op. iv. 21). So we will consider every detail given in the Gospel narratives, that we may be able to form at least some faint conception of the grand events which took place on that "first day of the week" when, by rising from the tomb, Jesus conquered death and sealed the charter of man's redemption.

"The third day He rose again." Fittingly does the Church chant her joyful Alleluias, and acclaiming this glorious first day of the week as *the day*, as the one which the Lord hath made *par excellence*, exhort her children to rejoice and be glad in celebrating it. It was a great day which witnessed the Creation, so great that "the morning stars praised God together, and all the sons of God made a joyful melody."¹ It was a great day when the Incarnate Son of God came into this world, and the Eternal Father commanded all the angels to worship Him, but greater still was that "first day of the week," when our Redeemer wrought His crowning miracle and the Gospel history reached its climax, since He was thus proved to be the Messiah. Upon this doctrine, as upon a sure foundation, the Gospel of Christ rests. It was this truth which the Apostles went forth to teach—they were the living witnesses to the Resurrection.

Thus we find St. Paul telling the Corinthians, "If Christ be not risen again your faith is vain, for you are yet in your sins."² But He has risen. "Thanks be to God for this unspeakable gift," for the certainty of the Resurrection of Jesus, which contains in itself the promise and gage of our own resurrection from the dead. Each Christian can now make his own the triumphant challenge of Holy Job, as, in a prophetic vision, he looked down the vista of long ages to this glorious first day—"I know that my Redeemer liveth, and in the last day I shall rise out of the earth and

¹ Job xxxviii. 7.

² 1 Cor. xv. 17.

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I shall be clothed again with my skin, and in my flesh I shall see my God. Whom I myself shall see, and my eyes shall behold, and not another : This my hope is laid up in my bosom.”¹

Having touched upon the importance of the Resurrection, which is the fundamental article of our Creed, we will now consider some of the *circumstances* of this glorious mystery. We know that Jesus “gave up the ghost” on Good Friday at three o’clock. While the faithful friends and disciples of our Lord wept for Him, while His bitter enemies rejoiced over His death, whither did His Holy Soul take its flight ? To Hades, where the souls of the just were awaiting the hour of His Resurrection, which was destined to be that of their complete redemption. St. Peter states this explicitly when, in his first Epistle, he says : “Christ also died once for our sins, the just for the unjust, that He might offer us to God, being put to death indeed in the flesh but enlivened in the spirit, in which also coming, He preached to those spirits that were in prison.”²

Throughout long ages some of these holy souls had waited and prayed for His coming. We cannot realise the intensity of their yearning for their Redeemer. Freed from the burden and distractions of the flesh, their souls gravitated more and more towards their God, in proportion as their purity increased. Full of faith and hope, they waited and prayed : “How long, O Lord, how long ?” “O, that Thou wouldst rend the Heavens and come down !” “As the hart panteth after the fountains of water, so my soul panteth after Thee, O God. My soul hath panted after the strong living God.”³ Thus the prayers and plaintive longings of holy Abel, of Adam and Eve, of countless patriarchs, prophets, kings, and devout souls had pierced the Heavens. Of all who had died in the friendship of God, not one had, as yet, entered Heaven. It was only when Jesus had “overcome the sharpness of death” and risen

¹ Job xix. 25.

² 1 Pet. iii. 18.

³ Ps. xli. 2.

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gloriously on the third day that He could "open the kingdom of Heaven to all believers."

On Good Friday, by dying on the tree of shame, He conquered death. From that wounded Body, the Soul of Jesus went forth, glorious and impassible to the prison of Hades, and the presence of "the strong, living God," transformed those sombre regions into a blessed Paradise. The glorious vision of the Redeemer suddenly lit up the darkness of Hades with His Divine Majesty. What an ecstasy of bliss inundated those holy souls! Some, like those who perished in the Deluge, had provoked God to anger by their incredulity when "the patience of God was waiting in the days of Noe"—waiting in vain for men's repentance. They "had corrupted their ways," and God overwhelmed them with the waters of the Flood, that He might bring before them the grievousness of their sins, lead them to turn to Him and save them hereafter. When Jesus entered Hades, these souls, purified by contrition and long ages of waiting, adored their Redeemer. Some, like holy Job, had served God faithfully while on earth, and when the long-expected Saviour came to visit them in their captivity, they could look forward to speedily receiving the reward of the just.

The presence of Jesus filled them with rapture: they adored and thanked Him with all the powers of their souls. Their long, long probation was over; "the strong living God" had come to take them unto Himself. Oh, the joy of that moment! Some day we hope to share their happiness. We look forward to that moment when, having expiated our sins in Purgatory and thus purified our souls, shall we be summoned from the flames of the lower world to "see the King in His beauty," to dwell with Him for ever in the contemplation of the Beatific Vision. Then—and then only—shall we enter fully into the sentiments of those captive waiting souls—those "prisoners of hope." As our thoughts dwell on these mysteries and joys of "the

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world to come," how the things of earth shrink into insignificance! How little it really matters what place we occupy here below, provided we serve our God faithfully, so that nothing be wanting to us in any grace, and we be found "waiting for the manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ." ¹

We may accept the ancient tradition, which tells us that our Lord remained in Hades until the moment appointed for His Resurrection. There He revealed His Divine Power and authority and preached the Gospel, as He had done on earth. Some, like St. Joseph, holy Simeon, Anna the prophetess, and St. John the Baptist, had seen Him in the flesh. How they rejoiced that His work was accomplished! They now understood what had been so obscure before. Moses saw the Deliverer, raised up by God, whom he had predicted and of whom he was the type. Isaias, the martyred prophet of the Passion, at length saw "this beautiful One in His robe, walking in the greatness of His strength." ² At last He had come speaking justice—a defender to save.

All these true servants of God had been conquered by death, and it was fitting that when Jesus had vanquished this tyrant, He should spoil him of his victims. Yes, even in hell, the Redeemer's power was felt. If the devils had not known before for certain that Jesus was the Incarnate Son of God, they knew it after. "He gave up the ghost." Then they saw that, in urging on the Jews to compass the death of Jesus, they had been working for their own final defeat. In their fiery prison they were forced to render homage to the Name of Jesus, for because "He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross . . . God also hath exalted Him and given Him a name which is above all other names." ³

While Jesus was receiving the homage of the souls in Limbo, His dead Body, swathed in the linen bands, still

¹ 1 Cor. i. 7.

² Isa. lxiii.

³ Phil. ii. 8.

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lay in the garden tomb. How we wish we could have gazed upon those sacred features and seen the wounds in His hands and feet. What an abasement for the Lord of Life, the sinless Saviour, to have yielded to death—the penalty of sin! How we should have loved to have kept our vigil in that silent tomb, to have worshipped our crucified Saviour in union with the choirs of angels. The Divinity was enshrined in that dead Body, and legions of angels kept watch there.

We will take up our station there in spirit soon after midnight on the first day of the week. The guards have just been relieved, for the third night-watch began at twelve o'clock. The silvery rays of the full moon light up the garden, the tomb, and the surrounding districts. The cross on Calvary stands out against the heavens, a shimmering light is reflected from the gilded roof and pinnacle of the House of the Lord. All Nature is hushed. In the garden where the King of Kings lies buried at this midnight hour—

“ No other sound is heard
But the dull measured tread of sentinels,
Who with slow, sullen steps pass and repass
The silent tomb, chafing that such a task
By Gentile scorn to Jewish prejudice
Had been assigned. Then ever and anon
Strange terror seizes.”

The watch-fire burns brightly, and close by it the soldiers who have just been relieved are sleeping soundly, wrapped in their large cloaks. The Royal Sepulchre is well guarded. Our Saviour, when dead, is numbered with the rich. It was thus that Isaias had seen it in prophetic vision, when he wrote: “ He shall give the ungodly for His burial and the rich for His death, because He hath done no iniquity.” The soldiers—spear in hand—keep guard; the stone which closes the entrance to the sepulchre is not only sealed but

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cramped to the live rock with iron bands.¹ The “ungodly” keep watch at the tomb, for it is situated in a private garden, so the chief priests have no power to send their Temple guards to fulfil this office. As Jew and Gentile gathered round the manger when the Christ came into the world, so now they gather round His Cross and unite in burying Him with royal honours, since the Roman guard was sent at the request of the chief priests.

But the solemn moment of the glorious Resurrection of our Lord is at hand. We know that it took place during the third Roman night-watch, during those hours “when deep sleep is wont to hold men.” At the appointed moment, Jesus came forth glorious from the sepulchre, unseen by the soldiers who paced up and down before the tomb. According to an ancient tradition, Jesus came from Hades accompanied by the multitudes of holy souls and the angelic legions. Accepting this tradition, we may conjecture that our Lord, before He raised His Sacred Body to life again, allowed these saints of the Old Testament to contemplate His dead Body torn with scourges and His hands and feet pierced by the cruel nails. Then they realised, as never before, the evil of sin. They learned how Jesus had loved them, and what He had endured for their Redemption.

Let us pause and reverently contemplate the wondrous scene. Thousands of holy souls, legions of angels are present in the narrow limits of that sepulchre. Matter offers no obstacle to them. They throng around, and perceiving the dead Body of the Redeemer, they offer their adorations to the Divinity enshrined therein. The soul of Jesus is separated from His Body—as one day our souls will be—preparing to raise It by His Almighty Power to enter It and again endow It with life, to confer upon It

¹ St. Bede, who visited Jerusalem in the seventh century, states that he saw the holes in the rock in which the iron bands had been inserted.

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the qualities of a glorious body—subtlety, agility, brightness, and impassibility—qualities which, in virtue of His Resurrection, will be granted to the bodies of the elect at the day of judgment. He is about to fulfil His many solemn promises. When challenged by His enemies as to the source of His authority, He had said: “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up,” but St. John adds: “He spoke of the temple of His body.”¹ Referring to His life, Jesus had also said: “No man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself, and I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up.”²

The supreme moment has come to fulfil these promises. In an instant, like a flash of lightning, Jesus’ soul enters His inanimate Body and raises it to a glorious life.

“*Venite adoremus.*”

Even “the earth trembles at the presence of the Lord,” when “it is enlightened with His Glory.”³ If the guards “became as dead men” when in presence of the angel, “whose countenance was as lightning, and his raiment as snow,” what must have been the awe and reverent adoration of the holy souls and the heavenly choirs? How they abased themselves before the glorified Risen Saviour! If, as St. Jerome tells us, even during our Lord’s life on earth “certainly a flame of fire and starry brightness flashed from His eyes and the majesty of God shone in His face,” if the Roman cohort, overcome by His majestic mien in the garden of Gethsemani “went backward and fell to the ground,”⁴ what must have been the impression produced by the sight of the glorified Humanity?

Can we form any conception of the rapture experienced by the angelic and human spectators who were present when Jesus rose? No, for “eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what

¹ St. John ii. 19.

³ Ps. cxiv. 7.

² *Ibid.*, x. 18.

⁴ St. John xviii. 6.

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things God hath prepared for them that love Him,"¹ and included in these "things," and the greatest of them, is the vision of Jesus glorified.

To attempt to depict that wondrous scene which took place in the sepulchre when our Redeemer rose would be to "rush in" like fools "where angels fear to tread." Yet since, as St. Paul goes on to say, "To us God hath revealed them by His Spirit," we may turn to the inspired word of God and there find, in our human language, some description of the Son of God in His glorified Humanity. Thus, when Jesus was transfigured upon Mount Thabor, we read that "His face did shine as the sun" and "His garments became white as snow and glittering."² St. John has given us a description of the Son of God as He appeared to him in a vision: "I was in the spirit on the Lord's day, . . . and I saw one like to the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. And His head and His hairs were white, as white wool, and as snow, and His eyes were as a flame of fire. And His feet like unto fine brass as in a burning furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters. . . . His face was as the sun shineth in His power. And when I had seen Him, I fell at His feet as dead. And He laid His hand upon me, saying: 'Fear not. I am the first and the last, and alive and was dead, and behold I am living for ever and ever, and have the keys of death and of hell.'"³ In another vision in which St. John saw our Lord overcoming the beast, he thus describes His appearance: "I saw heaven opened and behold a white horse, and He that sat upon was called faithful and true. . . . His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on His head many diadems . . . and He was clothed with a garment sprinkled with blood, and His name is called THE WORD OF GOD. . . . And He hath on His gar-

¹ 1 Cor. ii. 9.

² St. Matt. xvii. ; St. Mark ix. ; St. Luke ix.

³ Apoc. i. 10 *et seq.*

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ment and on His thigh written : KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS." ¹

On this glorious " first day of the week " that hallowed sepulchre, like the heavenly Jerusalem, has " no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it " and dissipate the darkness, " for the glory of God hath enlightened it, and the Lamb is the lamp thereof." ² There the first fruits of men and angels' homage to the Risen Saviour are offered, and we may catch the faint echoes of their jubilant hymn of praise. We may hear " the voice of many angels," . . . and the number of them is " thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice : " The Lamb that was slain is worthy to receive power, and divinity, and wisdom, and strength, and honour and glory and benediction." Then the vast multitude of the redeemed continue the joyous canticle : " Thou art worthy, O Lord . . . because Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God in Thy Blood, out of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation." And now are heard all saying : " To the Lamb, benediction, and honour and glory and power for ever and ever." ³

We will unite our voices with those of the angels and holy souls, thanking Him for His glorious Resurrection, which is the pledge of our own. We will give Him thanks, too, for His great glory and for the blessed hope of seeing Him " as He is " when life's pilgrimage shall be ended, for the hope of gazing upon our Risen Saviour in His glorified Humanity, for the consolation of seeing those whom we have loved and lost, raised by the power of God to a new life, when their corruptible bodies shall have put on incorruption and their mortal frame will be invested with immortality. For all who " sleep in Jesus," " death is swallowed up in victory." Thanks be to our Redeemer for this proof of His infinite love.

The angels worship their Lord, they praise the Son of God for having sealed the work of Redemption. Now their

¹ Apoc. xix., *passim*.

² *Ibid.*, xxi.

³ *Ibid.*, v., *passim*.

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intense longing "to look into" the mysteries of man's Redemption is partially satisfied. The manifold wisdom of God "is made known to the principalities and the powers in the heavenly places, according to the eternal purpose which He made in Christ Jesus our Lord."¹ Now they know why they were not allowed to strike down those who insulted their King, even as the angel of the Lord had avenged the insults offered to the God of Israel by Sennacherib, when the heavenly messenger was permitted to slay 185,000 Assyrians.² Those spirits "bright and glorious" who scourged Heliodorus for profaning the Temple—so that "he lay speechless and without hope of recovering" until the priest, Onias, had offered a sacrifice for the recovery of the man—now understand why they were not permitted to destroy those who tortured the Son of God. Those legions were at hand when Jesus suffered, but with the exception of the one privileged spirit, who was permitted to "strengthen" Jesus in Gethsemani, they were not allowed to intervene during the hours of the powers of darkness. They see the true significance of the Temptation, the Agony, and the Crucifixion. All is clear to them, and just as clearly shall we see when we enter the portals of eternity, how in all the mysterious ways of Providence that guided the course of our life on earth, there was the tender, loving hand of our Heavenly Father working all together unto good for our eternal salvation. Meanwhile, firm in our faith in His Promises, we can lean on our God and in His strength go bravely forward.

Jesus our Risen Saviour, our **STRONG LIVING GOD**, has risen never to die again. Let us rejoice with Him, and this Easter joy will raise us above the trifles and bewitchments of earth, and help us along our homeward journey. It will strengthen us to bear the cross if, like our Lord, we look forward to the joy that is set before—to the blessed hope of seeing our Risen Saviour in His Glory.

¹ Eph. iii. 10.

² See 4 Kings xix. 35.

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SUMMARY FOR MEDITATION

First Prelude.—Visit Limbo in spirit, and contemplate the Soul of Jesus, consoling these faithful spirits so long imprisoned there. Then join the cortège when they accompany our Lord to the sepulchre.

Second Prelude.—Pray for the grace to enter into the joy of our Lord, to rejoice with Him and to look forward with confidence to the resurrection of the just.

First Point.—Jesus' Holy Soul enters Hades, the waiting spirits are overwhelmed with joy on seeing their promised Saviour. They worship and thank Him.

Second Point.—The scene in the garden after midnight on that great "first day of the week." The dead Body of Jesus lies in the tomb, surrounded by legions of angels. Without, the Roman guards keep watch. All Nature is silent; deep sleep holds men.

Third Point.—The moment of the Resurrection. The Soul of Jesus enters His inanimate Body in presence of the souls from Limbo and the angel hosts. They worship their Risen Saviour.

Colloquy.—Pray that, in your trials and the long-deferred realisation of your hopes, you may cling to "the strong, living God," and wait confidently for Him. Ask earnestly for the grace to enter into the joy of Jesus, and thus forget your light tribulations. Thank Him for having sealed the charter of our Redemption by His glorious Resurrection. Ask that you may rise with Christ by living above the trifles of earth. Thank Him for the gifts He reserves for you, here and in eternity.

VII

JESUS APPEARS TO HIS BLESSED MOTHER

JESUS had told His disciples and Apostles that He would rise again on the third day after His Crucifixion. This promise almost always follows the predictions of His Passion. He who is the eternal Truth fulfilled His promise to the letter. To His own—though not to the Jews in general—Jesus “shewed Himself alive after His Passion, by many proofs, for forty days appearing to them and speaking of the kingdom of God”¹—of the establishing of His Church on earth.

Before entering upon a detailed study of the blessed manifestations of the Risen Saviour, it will be useful to fix our thoughts upon the whole series of these apparitions—to note (1) their *resemblances*, (2) *contrasts*, and (3) *adaptation to the circumstances* under which each was granted.

1. *Certain features of the Manifestations are common to all of them.* Thus all were *unexpected* as regards the exact hour. Probably even our Lady, who knew that her Son would rise again on the third day, did not know the hour. If our Lord promised to see His disciples in Galilee, He did not specify the time. Mary Magdalene and her companions, the Apostles and disciples, were not expecting to see their Lord. His appearance was always sudden, no sign of His coming was given—He simply “stood in their midst.” “Jesus came,” they knew not *whence, when, or how.* He

¹ Acts i. 3.

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vanished from their sight, and they knew not when to expect Him again. This showed that our Lord's Body had changed Its state although It was His own real Body, and they recognised It as such. It had not the grossness and density of matter, nevertheless, they could touch and handle It. "As the soul assumes the form of its ideas, so the Body of Jesus assumes the form which best becomes It, without interfering with the essentials of Its nature and identity."¹

Hence Jesus could and did assume "another shape" when He pleased. He manifested Himself to St. Mary Magdalene, who took Him for a gardener. To the pilgrims of Emmaus, He showed Himself as a pilgrim. When He stood on the seashore "the disciples knew not that it was Jesus."² at first. Of several apparitions we are told that the disciples' eyes were holden, as though Jesus did not mean them to realise His Presence at once. We notice also that every manifestation reveals the same loving condescension on the part of our Lord. He invited His Apostles to assure themselves that it was really He Himself by handling His hands and feet: He ate in their presence, He strove to allay their fears.

If we look at the *effects* of these manifestations, we note that every apparition brought a conviction that Jesus was indeed risen, together with fullness of peace and joy. "Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord" might fittingly close the narration of each manifestation.

2. *Fixing our thoughts on the contrasts exhibited in the series of manifestations, we notice several.* Jesus manifested Himself in Judea and in Galilee, in the city of Jerusalem and in the country, in a dwelling and in the open air, by the seashore and in a garden. He showed Himself to individuals—to Mary His Mother, St. Mary Magdalene, Peter, and James—to assemblies, as when He appeared in the Cenacle and on the mountain in Galilee. He visited the pastors and their flock, now united, now separated.

¹ Père Didon.

² St. John xxi. 4.

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He appeared before His Ascension and also twice after—to St. Stephen and to Saul of Tarsus. Finally He manifested Himself to purity and fidelity in the person of His blessed Mother ; to penitence and fidelity when he showed Himself to Mary Magdalene ; to penitence and love when He appeared to Simon Peter ; to incredulity when He showed Himself to St. Thomas.

3. Turning to another facet of the manifestations, we cannot fail to see how Jesus adapted Himself and timed His visit to the mental state of those to whom He manifested Himself. If His disciples took Him to be a disembodied spirit, Jesus appealed to their senses, inviting them to touch and handle Him, speaking first to calm their fears by the sound of His familiar voice. He reminded His disciples of what He had previously told them, and when the disciples of Emmaus were troubled and perplexed, He explained the problems, which seemed so inexplicable, before revealing His Identity. To the ministering, sorrowing women, His salutation was, "All Hail"—"Rejoice"; to the troubled Apostles He gave peace, as the prelude to the Easter springtide of joy which was to follow.

We will now treat of the various Apparitions of our Lord, and, according to an old Catholic tradition mentioned by St. Ambrose in the fourth century and referred to by later writers, the first manifestation of the Risen Saviour was made to His Blessed Mother.¹ "Christians look upon

¹ The inspired record of the incidents connected with Christ's Resurrection do not mention Mary, but neither do they pretend to give a complete account of all that Jesus did and said. The Fathers too are silent as to Mary's share in the joys of her Son's triumph over death. Still St. Ambrose (*De Virgini*, III. 14, P.L. xvi. 283) states expressly: "Mary therefore saw the Resurrection of the Lord: She was the first who saw it and believed. Mary Magdalen, too, saw it, though she wavered." George of Nicomedia (*Or.*, IX., P.G.C. 1500) infers from Mary's share in our Lord's sufferings that, before all others and more than all, she must have shared in the triumph of her Son. In the twelfth century an apparition of the Risen

Jesus appears to His Blessed Mother

the fact as self-evident, but as unbelievers would not be impressed by it as a valid argument for Christianity, no mention is made of it in the Gospels. The Church indirectly acknowledges this tradition by making the principal Church of our Blessed Mother—St. Mary Major—the station for Easter Sunday, and by granting a plenary indulgence to all who visit it.¹

As devout Catholics, we feel it could not have been otherwise, for Mary must have been dearer to Jesus, *naturally*, than any other human being. She was His Mother and He was the most perfect Son, hence He fulfilled every filial duty, and it is the place of a son to assuage his mother's grief, when it lies in his power. Our Lady was immaculate, and therefore dearer *spiritually* to Jesus than any other of His disciples, for they had all sinned in Adam. Mary alone was conceived without sin. Again, Mary had suffered *longer* and *more intensely* than any of our Lord's followers. Her sufferings had begun with the Incarnation and the predicted sword of sorrow had ever been suspended before her eyes, from the moment Simeon had told her she would be pierced by it. Jesus could tell her more of His coming Passion than He could to His disciples, and Mary knew the awful details earlier. Of all who lived on the earth, there was none so worthy of Jesus' first visit as His Immaculate Mother. As she had suffered beyond all others, it was fitting that she should rejoice before they did. No Apostle had been as faithful to Jesus as the Mother of Sorrows. When the chosen band—including St. John—"forsook Him and fled," Mary came forward to share in

Saviour to His Blessed Mother is admitted by Rupert of Deutz (*De Div. Offic.*, VII. 25, P.L.C. clxx. 306), and also by Eadmer (*De Excell. V. M.*, 6, P.L. clix. 586), St. Bernadin of Siena (*Quadrages.*, I., in Resurrection, Sermon, lii. 3), St. Ignatius of Loyola (*Ex. Sp.* I., appar.), Suarez (*De Myst. vitæ Christi*, xlix. 1), Maldonatus (In IV Evang. ad xxviii. Matt.), &c. . . . *Catholic Encyclopædia*, article "Virgin."

¹ Maas, S. J., *Life of Christ*, p. 560.

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the humiliations of her Son, to accompany Him along the sorrowful way, to stand by His Cross during the long three hours' Agony. Therefore, Jesus' love for her must have prompted Him to recompense her unswerving fidelity and unutterable love by appearing to her before He manifested Himself to St. Mary Magdalene, who was *the first* to see Him *of the disciples*.

Let us contemplate our dear Lady—the Mother of Jesus—waiting for her Son's visit on Easter Sunday morning. It was already the first day of the week, just after midnight. Deep sleep held in its grasp the friends and foes of Jesus. Only a few ministering women were awake, preparing their ointments. We may presume that our dear Lady was alone, engaged in prayer. Firm in her faith and hope, she awaited the fulfilment of Jesus' promises. She knew that the vision would not be delayed long, for that blessed third day had come at last.

When Tobias went on his journey and delayed to return, we read that his mother, "Anna, sat beside the way daily, on the top of a hill, from whence she might see him afar off. And while she watched his coming from that place, she saw him afar off, and presently perceived it was her son coming."¹ Then Tobias also went out to meet him "and receiving him kissed him, as did also his wife, and they began to weep for joy." Here we have a touching picture of a mother's love. But what must have been the love and longing desire of Mary to see her Divine Son! The billows of affliction had rolled over Mary's pure soul, but "Many waters cannot quench charity, neither can the floods drown it."²

No human words can describe the longing of that pure soul to see her Risen Saviour, of that perfect Mother to welcome her Divine Son back from the Kingdom of Death. She could make the Psalmist's words her own. How often had she heard these sacred psalms chanted in the Courts

¹ Tobias xi.

² Ps. viii. 7.

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of the Lord, by the sons of the Levites! She knew the Canticle of Canticles, and during this vigil surely the inspired words came to her mind: "Till the day break and the shadows retire, return, My Beloved."¹ "My heart hath said to Thee: My face hath sought Thee; Thy face, O Lord, will I seek."² "Thou that dwellest in the gardens, make me hear Thy voice."³ "As the hart panteth after the fountains of waters, so my soul panteth after Thee, O God, My soul hath thirsted after the strong, living God."⁴ "Cause me to hear Thy mercy in the morning." Mary knew that God would not suffer His Holy One to see corruption, that Jesus would soon fill her with the joy of His countenance. Yet content to wait patiently for the appointed moment, our Immaculate Mother could say: "As for me, my prayer is to Thee, O Lord, for the time of Thy good pleasure, O God."⁵

As the moments of her lonely vigil passed, we may presume that, like the Psalmist, the Virgin Mother of Jesus could say: "I remember the days of old, I meditated on all Thy works. I stretched forth my hands to Thee, my soul is as earth without water unto Thee."⁶

How much there was to recall concerning the works of Jesus! There was that solemn midnight hour when, while she was praying for the speedy Advent of the Messiah, her room was suddenly illumined by the presence of Gabriel, who came to ask her to be the Mother of the Redeemer of Israel. Mary could look back to the joys of the Divine Maternity, to the peaceful days in the hamlet of Nazareth, where her Child "advanced in wisdom and age and grace with God and man."⁷ What stupendous miracles Jesus had worked during His Public Life; one of the greatest—the raising of Lazarus—had been the proximate cause of His Death. But God has so willed it. Thinking over the

¹ Cantic. ii. 17.

² Ps. xxvi. 8.

³ Cantic. viii. 13.

⁴ Ps. xli. 1.

⁵ Ps. lxviii. 14.

⁶ Ps. cxlii. 5.

⁷ St. Luke ii. 52.

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awful details of the Passion, Mary uttered her customary prayer, that which expressed the abiding disposition of her soul: "Be it unto me according to Thy Word."

Now her Jesus is in Limbo; there He consoles the saints that have left this world. The Mother of God is glad for their sakes. Soon He will come to her: she is content to wait for the time of His good pleasure, and even while she repeats her *Fiat mihi secundum verbum Tuum*, lo, He stands before her. *Venite adoremus*¹ . . .

"And when they had adored God and given Him thanks, they sat down together." With all reverence, may we not presume that something like this happened when Jesus, the Conqueror of Death and Hell, stood face to face, in His Risen Humanity, with His loved Mother. How much they had to say, how much was understood without poor inadequate human words. The Mother adored her Son and her God. She congratulated Him on His glorious Victory. She saw the prints of the Wounds. The Redemption was an accomplished fact. As Mary's pure soul had been overwhelmed with affliction and grief during the Passion, as she had suffered then more than the brave Mother of the seven Machabees, whom Antiochus put to death and who joined "a man's heart to a woman's thought,"² so the pure joy that inundated her immaculate soul, when her Divine Son, risen from the grave, stood in her presence—that joy, no tongue can speak: "It passeth all understanding." The Mother entered into the joy of her Son in the fullest sense; she understood it as no other human creature could have done, for Mary shared the confidence of Jesus in a special way. To her immaculate purity, certain supernatural revelations were granted, which the ordinary disciples of Jesus were not capable of receiving. Jesus' Passion was over—His sufferings had been limited by time, His joy was to be eternal.

There is a tradition that Jesus brought with Him, when

¹ Tobias x. 12.

² 2 Mach. vii. 21.

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He appeared to His blessed Mother, some of the souls of the just from Hades, and that He presented those who had been types and figures of Him to "the Woman," of whom it was prophesied that she should crush the head of the serpent. That little oratory in which Jesus manifested Himself became the vestibule of Heaven, since there were gathered together Jesus, His Mother, and the saints who had slept.

All good things in this world must come to an end, and Jesus, having consoled His blessed Mother and filled her with intense happiness, withdrew. There were sorrowing souls to console, and Mary rejoiced in the knowledge that their grief would so soon be turned into joy. She certainly did not seek to retain Him as Mary Magdalene did later, for the Mother of Jesus possessed in her soul Him, whom she had loved above all things. Jesus left His Mother in an ecstasy of joy. Fittingly might Mary have sung again her sublime Magnificat: "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour," for her Redemption was sealed by the Resurrection as well as ours. It was in view of her Son's Atoning work that she had been preserved from original sin. "Because He hath regarded the humility of His handmaid." He had chosen her for His Mother, associated her with Him in the work of Redemption, permitted her to stand by His Cross, and, having conquered Death, had come to announce to her His victory.

"For, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call Me blessed." If few called Mary blessed during her Son's lifetime, millions were to honour and invoke her in all ages until time shall be no more, and then eternally in Heaven. In her true humility, Mary did not seek to deny her greatness since it came from God and contributed to His glory, because "He that is mighty hath done great things to me, and holy is His Name." He had done great things for her, and in virtue of the Divine Maternity, she was destined to be the Mother of the Church in its infancy, the helper of the Apostles. When her work on earth was

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over, her place was to be at the right hand of her Son—the Mother of God and of men. Never has God done, never will He do such “great things” for any other human being.

How Jesus, the Risen Saviour, had “shown might in His arm” and “scattered the proud in the conceit of their heart”! Had He not overthrown the kingdom of Satan and wrested his captives from him? Henceforth, Jesus had the keys of Hell and of Death.

But all the time that the apparition of Jesus to his blessed Mother lasted, the legions of angels were present. They too, we may believe, congratulated their Queen. If it be true that Satan and his accomplices fell from their high estate, because they had refused to worship one born of a woman, how those who had remained faithful had cause for rejoicing in their fidelity. They worshipped the Lord of Life; they congratulated their Queen.

The Church, throughout the ages, also congratulates Mary on the Resurrection of her Divine Son. As the Easter solemnities come round in their season, the Paschal Antiphon re-echoes in our churches.

Queen of Heaven, rejoice. Alleluia.

Because He whom thou didst deserve to bear, Alleluia,
Has risen as He said. Alleluia.

Pray for us to God. Alleluia.

Ÿ. Rejoice and be glad, O Virgin Mary. Alleluia.

R. Because the Lord hath truly risen. Alleluia.

We have thought over the manifestation of Jesus to our dear Lady, and tried to realise in our feeble measure something of the blessedness and solemnity of that meeting, what lesson may we gather for our own spiritual profit? Perhaps the one that comes home most forcibly to us, as pilgrims along life's highway, is that on the royal road of the Holy Cross, although “In the evening, weeping shall have place,” yet “in the morning, gladness”¹ cometh. We have contemplated the Mother of Sorrows mourning

¹ Ps. xxix. 6.

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for her Son. She watched patiently during the dark night hours when Jesus lay in the tomb, and for the time weeping prevailed. That glorious Easter morning came at last and brought gladness to our Blessed Mother. Thus it will be for each of us, if we are faithful to our God.

Sorrow endures for a night—all terrestrial pain is of its nature fleeting. It seems when tribulation bears us down that its weight will never be lightened, but gradually the keenness of the pain is blunted, the cross becomes lighter, and when it has done its sanctifying and purifying work, a pierced Hand ever lifts our burden. Once more let us recall the great truth so often forgotten.—*Earth is not a finality*. Were it the term of all things, then indeed we should be “of all men the most miserable.” Earth is but a brief span—the first infinitesimal part—of a life that is to have no end.

Many are burdened with temporal difficulties, many have trials in their family circle. For some, the sorrow comes from the violence of the devil’s temptation; for others, it is the result of spiritual desolation. Some, again, are sitting waiting in the Valley on the brink of the river of death, waiting for the manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ. Days are long when physical pain holds us in its grip, when we mourn those whose existence seemed bound up with ours. Yes, but God has fixed the limit; He has ordained an hour when He will manifest Himself, either wholly, as He does when He calls a soul hence, or partially, as when He visits and comforts a soul by bringing “upon her as it were a river of peace,” and fulfilling the precious promise: “As one whom a mother caresseth, so will I comfort you, and you shall be comforted in Jerusalem.”¹

“They that are redeemed by the Lord shall return and shall come into Sion singing praises, and joy everlasting shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, sorrow and mourning shall flee away.”² This promise, made to the Jews, applies to the salvation of those for

¹ Isa. lxvi. 13.

² *Ibid.*, li. 11.

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whom Jesus shed His Precious Blood, and whom He will one day permit to enter the Heavenly Sion. The whole tenor of the Easter manifestations is joy; therefore we should strive to rise to this spiritual joy, by entering into the sentiments, as far as we can, of those to whom Jesus appeared, of His Blessed Mother, of the Apostles and disciples, above all, of entering into the joy of our Lord.

“ O God, who by the Resurrection of Thy Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, hath been pleased to fill the world with joy, grant, we beseech Thee, that by the Virgin Mary, His Mother, we may receive the joys of eternal life through the same Christ our Lord.” Amen.

SUMMARY FOR MEDITATION

First Prelude.—Consider our Lady in prayer, waiting for the manifestation of her Divine Son on Easter Day.

Second Prelude.—Ask that by Jesus' merits and Mary's intercession, you may attain to eternal life.

First Point.—Resemblances and contrasts in the manifestations of the Risen Saviour—their adaptation to circumstances. Jesus appeared to Mary first because she was His Mother, the one nearest and dearest; naturally, because she was His Mother, supernaturally, on account of her purity. She had suffered more as the Mother of Sorrows, had followed Him closer as the Virgin most faithful.

Second Point.—Mary waiting for her Son and God. He comes and inundates her soul with joy. Mary worships her God and congratulates her Son.

Third Point.—Mary remains in ecstatic prayer; the angels congratulate their Queen. We ought also to rejoice in God our Saviour.

Colloquy.—Adore our Risen Saviour in union with His Holy Mother. Thank Him for having put the seal to your Redemption. Ask for the gift of rejoicing in the Lord, for a perfect trust in Him in all trials. Beg the intercession of the Queen of Heaven that you may attain to the joys of eternal life, and see your Redeemer face to face, and the Virgin Mother on her throne of glory. Pray for those in sorrow. Recite the “*Regina Cæli.*”

VIII

THE ANGELS APPEAR TO THE HOLY WOMEN

HARMONISED NARRATIVE.—“ In the end of the sabbath, when it began to dawn, towards the first day of the week, very early in the morning, it being yet dark, came Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary (the mother) of James, and Salome, bringing the spices which they had prepared, to see the sepulchre. And they said one to another : Who shall roll us back the stone from the door of the sepulchre ?

“ And they came to the sepulchre, the sun being now risen. And looking, they saw the stone rolled back from the sepulchre, for it was very great. And going in, they found not the body of the Lord Jesus. Mary Magdalene ran, therefore, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved. And it came to pass that while (the other women) were astonished in mind at this, behold, two men stood by them in shining apparel. And as they were afraid, and bowed down their countenance towards the ground, the angel, answering, said to the women : Fear not you ; for I know that you seek Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified. Why seek you the living among the dead ? He is not here but is risen. Come and see the place where the Lord was laid. Remember how He spoke to you when He was yet in Galilee, saying : The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again. And going quickly, tell ye His disciples, and Peter, that He is risen, and that He goeth before you into Galilee ; There you shall see Him, as He told you. Lo, I have foretold it to you. And they remembered His words.

“ And they went out quickly from the sepulchre, and fled with fear and great joy, running to tell His disciples.”—ST. MATT. XXVIII. ; ST. MARK XVI. ; ST. LUKE XXIV. ; ST. JOHN XX.

THE four Evangelists all refer to the visit of the holy women to the sepulchre early on Easter morning, but these narratives do not agree in *minor* details. It is generally agreed by commentators that the apparent

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discrepancies arise from the fact that *several* groups of holy women went to the tomb. As all did not dwell equally close to the sepulchre, some arrived first and others followed. Among the first group, we find St. Mary Magdalene. She was accompanied by Mary, the mother of James the Less, and Salome. These three had stood together for a time "afar off" on Mount Calvary, when Jesus hung upon the cross, and they were the first at the grave. We know that "Joanna the wife of Chusa, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and *many others*" . . . *ministered to Jesus of their substance.*"¹ Joanna is also mentioned by St. Luke as one of those who told the Apostles the news of the Resurrection. This Evangelist explicitly says that: "It was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary (the mother) of James, and the other women that were with them, who told these things to the Apostles."² We know, too, that "*many women had followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto Him.*"³ St. Luke relates how St. Mary Magdalene, "Joanna and Mary of James and *the other women* that were with them"⁴ informed the Apostles that the sepulchre was empty, whence it is clear that *several* groups of ministering women went to the tomb. It is probable that these various groups met, and that Joanna, Susanna, and others formed two or even three parties. In view of these considerations and the fact that *all* the ministering women did not dwell together, the sequence of events, connected with the apparition of the angels to the ministering women on Easter morning, has been harmonised as follows by many eminent Biblical students :

1. A band of three women, including St. Mary Magdalene, set out for the sepulchre while it was yet dark.
2. They find the stone rolled away and the grave empty.
3. Mary Magdalene returns at once to tell Peter and John that our Lord's Body is no longer in the tomb.

¹ St. Luke viii. 3.

² *Ibid.*, xxiv. 10.

³ St. Matt. xxvii. 56.

⁴ St. Luke xxiv. 10.

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4. The other two, Mary of James and Salome, terrified, leave the sepulchre in haste, "saying nothing to no man," and start off for Jerusalem or Bethania.

5. Meanwhile Peter and John arrive, examine the sepulchre, and, finding it empty, return home.

6. The two women, having met another group—or perhaps two groups of their companions—turn back to go to the sepulchre with them.

7. *After* Peter and John have left, and *before* the united groups of women return, Mary Magdalene comes back and sees first the angel, then our Lord Himself appears to her.

8. The bands of women now come back to the sepulchre. They see first *one* angel sitting upon the stone. They enter the sepulchre and then perceive another, one of whom announces that Jesus has risen. As they go to tell the disciples, Jesus appears to them.

In this meditation, passing over the intervening incidents, we will confine our attention to the ministering women—(1) their journey to the sepulchre ; (2) their visit to the empty tomb ; (3) their flight, and their return with another group ; (4) the apparition of the Angel and their departure from the garden.

At last "the great Sabbath" was over, during which the ministering women, in such yearning, despairing grief, had sat and mourned for Jesus, going over in their minds all the events of His terrible Sufferings and Death. How long that day of utter darkness seemed ! At last it closed in ; the sun sank below the horizon and the dawn of the first day of the week, by releasing these faithful disciples from the Sabbath rest, gave them the welcome liberty to prepare their spices. These ministering women commenced their labour of love at once.

As we have remarked above, these faithful disciples did not occupy the same dwelling. Some had a shelter upon Mount Sion in the house of Mary, the mother of John Mark,

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and, in all probability, there were to be found our Blessed Lady, St. Mary Magdalene, Mary, the mother of James and Joseph, and Salome, the mother of the Apostles James and John. The Apostles, too, were doubtless dwelling in the Cenacle, or at least some of them, also a few of the ministering women may have had friends in the poorer part of the city, on the south-eastern slope. Moreover, the Galilean Paschal encampment was on the slopes of Mount Olivet, and, in these tents, there were certainly many disciples of Jesus—both men and women. Lazarus dwelt in Bethania, about two miles from the nearest city gate—now known as St. Stephen's Gate—and though he may have been lying concealed elsewhere, yet he would surely have opened his house to any of the Galilean pilgrims who were Christ's disciples, and, among these, to some of the ministering women. All the Evangelists call attention to the *many women* who accompanied Jesus from Galilee, watched Him "afar off" on the Cross, followed Him to the grave, and announced the news of the Resurrection to the Apostles. Of these "*many*" devoted followers we know but six by name—the three Marys, Joanna, Salome, and Susanna, but Jesus, their Lord and ours, knew each by name, even as He knows the name of each of His disciples, even as He knows mine.

Bearing in mind, then, that some of the holy women were dwelling in Jerusalem, not more than a mile from the sepulchre, while those who dwelt at Bethania were at least three miles away from it, there should be no difficulty in explaining the different notes of time given by the four Evangelists. From St. Matthew we learn that Mary Magdalene and her two companions went "to see the sepulchre," "in the end of the Sabbath," or, literally, "late on the Sabbath," by which we gather that the day of rest was over, though the *civil* day lasted until midnight. This Evangelist adds: "when it began to dawn towards the first day of the week." St. Luke and St. Mark both agree



Photo Anderson.

Apparition of the Angels to the Holy Women.

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in the statement that the women went "very early" to the sepulchre, but while St. John says "it was yet dark," St. Mark refers to "the sun being now risen." These apparent divergences can readily be reconciled if we remember that the women did certainly not all set forth from the same dwelling. Those who came from Bethania, for example, would have set out while "it was yet dark," but before they reached the sepulchre, the sun would have risen. Palestine lies nearer to the equator than England, therefore the dawn and twilight are shorter. At the Paschal season in Jerusalem, the transition from deep darkness to full daylight takes but one and a half hours to complete.

(1) We will watch the first group of holy women as, just "when it began to dawn," they leave the house of John Mark. It would have been useless for them to start earlier, for the city gates were not opened until the faint light of the first rays of the sun lit up the East. All night they have been occupied in preparing the spices. These probably consisted of gum from the myrrh tree, mixed with the fragrant powdered aloe wood. The Jews were accustomed to cover the bodies of the dead with this adhesive preparation, after which linen bands, also steeped in this mixture, were wound around the whole body, and over these a pure white "sindon" or shroud was placed. Jesus' sacred Body had been hurriedly and therefore provisionally embalmed on Good Friday, and the ministering women wished to complete what had been omitted then. They longed to give their *own* spices for this blessed purpose, although they knew that Joseph and Nicodemus had lavishly given all that was necessary. Love is ever prodigal in its gifts.

It took them some hours to prepare these spices, and they did their work with heavy hearts. Doubtless, Mary Magdalene, as she crushed and mixed these fragrant spices, thought of that supper in the house of Simon the leper. It was but eight days since that banquet, at which Jesus,

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her Master, Lazarus her brother, and many others were present. Mary Magdalene remembered how she had taken "a pound of ointment, of right (*i.e.* of real) spikenard of great value and anointed the feet of Jesus."¹ She had poured the precious ointment over His head, anointed His sacred feet, and wiped them with her beautiful hair. The whole "house was filled with the odour" of the costly perfume. The scene came vividly before her mind as the spices gave forth their fragrant odour when she and her companions were preparing their ointment. How little Mary Magdalene had realised the true meaning of Jesus' words when, taking her defence—as He had ever done—He said: "Let her alone, she hath done what she could!" "In pouring this ointment upon My body, she is come beforehand to anoint My body for the burial!" Yes, she had unwittingly anointed her Saviour's living Body beforehand; now she was preparing to anoint His dead Body. How rapidly the Drama of the Passion and Death had been enacted! It all seemed like a terrible nightmare, and yet it was all only too true!

At last the preparations are completed, and the three companions bearing their loving gifts—the precious spices and the linen bands—leave the house of John Mark. It is still dark, but the women wish to reach the sepulchre early, and, if needs be, they will wait by the city gates should these not yet be open. The road leads due north, past the palaces of Caiphas and Annas. A little further on, they perceive in the dim light the gorgeous palace of Herod. Already the faint rays of early dawn fall upon the gilded pinnacles and massive towers. They leave it on their left and perhaps glance at the Temple on their right. Presently they hear the blasts of the trumpets, which announce that the sun has risen over Hebron, and, this being the signal for opening the gates, they knew that they will be able to get out of the city. Shortly after passing

¹ St. John xii. 3.

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by Herod's Palace, they reach the old city wall. The sentinels have just opened the gates, and the three faithful women pass on towards Calvary, which stands just beyond Hezekiah's Pool.

How quiet everything is ! They meet just a few pilgrims, who are on their way to the Temple to worship at the morning sacrifice. The western side of the city is quieter than the eastern side at all times, for the poorer and more populous district lies due east, and the slopes of Mount Olivet afford more ample space for the pilgrims' tents than the deep, desolate Valley of Hinnom on the western boundary of Jerusalem. Do they recall what took place but one week earlier ? Then these ministering women had accompanied their loved Master when He entered the Holy City in lowly triumph. Then the mighty miracle worked for Lazarus had led thousands to go forth from Jerusalem to meet Him, as He came in from Bethania, with a vast multitude of His Galilean followers ; and the "whole city was moved." Now He Himself lies in His rock tomb. What a contrast !

As the faithful women pass on their way to the sepulchre, they exchange but few words. Deep grief is ever reticent or silent. They are thinking of Him whom their souls love, and longing to gaze once more and—as they think—for the last time upon His blessed face. The silence is broken when they ask one another : " Who will roll us back the stone from the door of the sepulchre ? " They knew that on the Parasceve, Joseph of Arimathea, with the help of his companions, " had rolled a great stone to the door of the monument." But they are not aware that Roman soldiers are guarding the tomb and that the stone has been sealed and cramped to the rock with iron bands. Had they known this, their question would have been : " How shall we manage to pass the guards, to get near to the sepulchre ? " Perhaps they would have deemed it useless to attempt to go to the tomb. As it was, they continued their way,

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trusting perhaps that Providence would permit them to fall in with some pilgrim strangers or friends who would help them to roll away the stone. They were willing to do their part, if only they could reach the sacred Body.

(2) On they speed, and we can picture Mary Magdalene going on ahead of her companions. Presently, before they reach the garden where Jesus was buried, they heard a dull, rumbling sound, and the very earth beneath their feet rocked and vibrated. Another earthquake! There had been one on the Parasceve. Terrified, the women press forward. Again the question arises to their lips: "Who will roll us back the stone?" when, looking up, "they saw the stone rolled back from the sepulchre." They saw this even from some distance off, for "the stone was very great." Joseph had built or hewn out for himself a large monument, and the wide entrance could be plainly seen, unblocked by any stone.

How intensely relieved these faithful women felt. The passage to the inner chamber of the tomb lay open before them. They conclude that they will be able to embalm and thus honour Him who, as they imagine, lies in the rock trough-shaped tomb. As yet no angels manifest themselves. It is fitting that these women should enter the tomb and convince themselves that their Lord's Body is not there. Watch them as they enter the low door of the outer chamber. The stone which closed the entrance now lies in the vestibule. They go down the narrow passage—one behind the other—down the steps which lead to the inner chamber. Their eyes turn towards the tomb, and, to their dismay, they see no body. The grave-cloths are there in order, those bands of linen which Joseph and Nicodemus had wound around our Lord's Body. On one side lay the swathes which had encircled His head. One fact was clear: the Lord's dead Body was not there—and this discovery overwhelmed the three women with fresh grief. Were they to be denied the satisfaction of rendering Him

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the last funeral services? Had the Jews—His pitiless foes—desecrated His dead Body? Had they ordered It to be buried with those of the thieves? Who had taken It away, and where had It been taken? Such were the thoughts which filled their minds. The very circumstances—the empty grave and grave-cloths not having been disturbed—facts which should have lit up their hopes again and reminded them that their Lord had predicted His Resurrection on the third day—did but serve to increase the grief.

(3) No sooner is Mary Magdalene convinced that the sepulchre is indeed empty—and “the sun being now risen” they can pierce the darkness of the inner recess and examine it carefully—than this faithful lover of Jesus hurries to get help. She hastens to tell “Simon Peter and the other disciple whom Jesus loved.” Surely they will help her and find out where the Lord’s Body has been laid. We will leave her for the moment as she runs breathlessly on her way back. Though she knows it not, she is the first herald of the Resurrection, since she informs these two Apostles that the sepulchre is empty.

Meanwhile, distracted with grief at not finding the Body of Jesus, Mary of James and Salome also fled, panic-stricken, “from the sepulchre, for a trembling and fear had seized them, and they said nothing to any man for they were afraid.” Probably they were too terrified to reason—they fled to tell the Apostles and other ministering women what had happened. So far the rifled tomb had no message of hope for these loving, despairing souls. They were seeking the Body of the Lord Jesus, and could not rest until they had found It.

As they fled thus in terror, we may conjecture that they met the other groups of ministering women—Joanna, Susanna, and their companions. These latter also carried spices and were bent on the same errand of love as the former group.

The newcomers see at once that something awful and

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mysterious has happened. Mary of James and Salome relate what has taken place. The presence of their companions has calmed them a little. After a few moments' conversation, they decide to return together to the sepulchre. All see, even afar off, that the stone is rolled away. Reverently the whole band, now numerous, of faithful disciples approach the sepulchre, but as they come close to the entrance they are dazzled by a bright light that is not of this earth.

(4) At the same moment "two men stand by them in shining apparel." Terror-stricken at the apparition of these angelic spirits in human form, the women prostrate themselves, bowing "their countenance towards the ground." The awe, which the absence of our Lord's Body had kindled in their souls, is now increased by the presence of these supernatural visitors. Two angels only appear, but how many more are present in that garden! How many angels are ever near us!

One of the angels breaks the solemn silence. Contemplate the scene. The glorious heavenly messengers standing gazing tenderly upon the prostrate women, who lie dazzled by the brightness and overawed by the presence of these blessed messengers. Listen to the words of this Angel of the Resurrection. He comes with a message from the Risen Saviour, and it will both console and rebuke these mourners. They will become, in their turn, the heralds of the Resurrection.

"Fear not you, for I know that you seek Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified." These are the words of consolation. There is a stress on the pronoun "*you*." The guards may well fear, for they are on the side of the enemies of Christ, but these faithful women—so true to their master during His Life and after His Death—they have no cause to fear. "*Fear not*." It is thus that the angels ever address God's servants. It was thus that angels spoke to Zachary, to our Lady, to the shepherds, to St.

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Paul when in evident danger of shipwreck. This angel knew how true these women were to Jesus, how they mourned for Him, hence this blessed messenger at once shows that he knows the cause of their sorrow—they seek Jesus of Nazareth. The angel uses the very words which the enemies of Jesus had placed over the Cross.

Note now the gentle rebuke, which corroborates the witness of the empty tomb: “Why seek you the living with the dead?” or, as it runs literally in the Greek, “the Living One”—He “who was dead and is now living for ever and ever,” He who has “the keys of death and of hell.”¹ Jesus is not to be found in the abode of the dead. On the tombs of the children of Adam, we read the words “Here lies”; we note the dates of death, the ages and the names. The cenotaph has never the same interest as the tomb, which rivets our attention, and appeals to our emotions precisely because it contains the mortal remains of some human being. But all this is reversed when we come to consider the sepulchre of Jesus. Here the truth that stands out is not “*Hic jacet*” but “*Non est hic.*” It is by this that He proves Himself to be our Divine Redeemer.

“Come and see the place where the Lord was laid.” What an invitation! We may conjecture that as the angel said these words, he turned and entered the sepulchre. Already two of these holy women had explored the recesses of the sepulchre by the faint rays of early dawn, and in that light they had perceived that the grave-cloths lay there intact, but they had found not the Body of the Lord Jesus.” Now that sepulchre is brilliantly lit up by the glory of the angels, and the women gaze upon the empty tomb. They know not what to think; hope springs up in their souls, joy dawns in their breasts, though at present they are too dazed, too overwhelmed with their past and present experiences to take in the full meaning of the

¹ Apoc. i. 17.

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angelic words. They have heard the words, "He is risen," they are gazing into the empty tomb, but the full faith in the Resurrection has not yet taken possession of their souls.

There were the grave-cloths—just as He had left them when His glorious Body passed through them. They had fallen in and were lying flattened, but not unwound. Surely no enemy would have taken the Body and left the grave-cloths thus, for the ointment used was adhesive, so that the linen bands adhered to the corpse, and it was not easy to remove them and then to rearrange them thus. No disciple would have tampered with the swathes and sindon, had such a one removed the sacred Body. These blessed mourners look and wonder, and the angel allows them time to take in all the circumstances. They were privileged to bear witness of the Resurrection, even to the Apostles. Fear and joy struggle for the mastery in their souls as they look around the empty sepulchre at the Angel's bidding. It could hardly be otherwise, for man ever trembles when brought closely in contact with any supernatural vision or being, and the empty sepulchre in which this manifestation was made, was the sepulchre where their Lord had been laid.

But the Angel has not given the full message, so he continues: "Remember how He spoke to you when He was in Galilee, saying: The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again. And, going quickly, tell ye His disciples and Peter that He is risen and that He goeth before you into Galilee. There you shall see Him, as He told you. Lo, I have foretold it to you." Thus the heavenly messenger concluded by reminding these women that their Master had predicted His own Resurrection. As he spoke *they remembered* their Lord's words. Frequently to these women, as to His Apostles, Jesus had spoken of His Resurrection, but His words "were hidden from them."

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Their false conception of a Messiah who should have one unbroken reign of temporal power and glory rendered them incapable of grasping the idea of a Messiah who should be despised, rejected, crucified, dead, and buried. Their false material Messianic hopes had been buried with their Master, and now their hopes rose again sublimated and freed from all fond illusions. "*They remembered His words.*"

O blessed moment of ecstatic joy when the soul "remembers the words of the Lord Jesus, and the Holy Ghost opens the intelligence and reveals their inner meaning." "*They remembered His words*": could they forget the sweetness of this moment? Like a flash of lightning those predictions came back to their memory. They seemed to see the very places where He uttered them, to hear the sweet accents of His voice as He spoke so solemnly to them. They remembered their inability to understand the meaning of these sad predictions, nor had they dared ask Him for an explanation. They doubtless feared to hear Him repeat them and more strongly emphasize these strange, awful prophecies. They had passed them over all too lightly or interpreted them allegorically.

"*They remembered His words*": those He had said in Galilee. How clearly Jesus had put before them all that was to happen to Him when He said: "The Son of man must suffer many things and be rejected by the ancients and chief priests and scribes and be killed, and the third day rise again."¹ He had given all the details of His Passion, when He had told them that the Son of man would "be delivered to the Gentiles," mocked, scourged, and spat upon, and that after they had put Him to death He would rise on the third day. All the rest had been literally fulfilled, and now they learn from a heavenly messenger that "*He is not here, He is risen.*"

These faithful women pass from the depths of loving,

¹ St. Luke ix. 22.

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despairing grief to the greatest joy—a joy that passeth all understanding. Jesus their Lord has truly risen! The grave-cloths bear their silent witness, the Angel had delivered His message, and the words of their loved Master come back to them. But joy must needs find some outlet, and these faithful women think of the Apostles and disciples who as yet know not the good news, who still mourn for the Living One as though He were dead. The Angel has bidden them go with the glad tidings to those who love Jesus so truly and console them. They hasten to do his bidding.

Watch them as they go out quickly from the sepulchre, “*running* to tell His disciples” the joyful tidings, *running* to obey the Angel’s command, *running* in the hope of making others partakers of their happiness. They “fled with fear,” for their emotion was so great. Had they not seen an Angel and spoken with Him? They fled, too, “with great joy,” for had they not learned from the angelic visitor that Jesus was truly risen? Surely, Mary the mother of James the Less, and Salome the mother of James (the Great) and John think of the blessed Mother of God, of their sons so heartbroken on account of their dead Master. Probably all the Apostles were taking refuge in the Cenacle, at least during the daytime if not at night. There these two holy women will find Peter—the penitent Apostle on whom, after his fall, Jesus had looked so tenderly. “If the Angel had not named Peter, he would not have dared to come amongst the disciples. Therefore he is named specially lest he should despair on account of his denial” (*St. Gregory*).

“*Tell ye . . . Peter.*” Note the “ye”; each and all were bidden tell him that the Risen Master’s messenger had mentioned him by name. How characteristic of the Good Shepherd to single out the straying sheep thus!

“*Running to tell His disciples.*” Run on, blessed messengers of the Resurrection. Great is your joy; but

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a few moments and it will be centupled, for your Lord, whom you serve so faithfully, will not wait until you return to Galilee before manifesting Himself to you. But a few moments, when you have just left the garden, He will show Himself to you. According to His blessed promise you "shall see Him again and your joy shall be full."

What spiritual fruit shall we gather before we, too, leave this hallowed garden? Precious lessons abound on all sides—lessons of love, faith, hope, and zeal. These holy women set out "very early on the first day of the week" to offer their loving gifts to their Lord. He needed no spices nor ointments, yet He accepted their offerings and recompensed the donors, thus teaching us that whatever we do for our Lord, even though our object is not attained, still it is never lost. Like the cup of cold water given in the name of Christ, it shall in no wise lose its reward, for with our Lord it is the *efforts* prompted by faith and love which count, not the *results*. The precious ointments prepared for Jesus were doubtless employed to embalm the dead body of one of His disciples, and He counted it as done unto Him. It is ever thus with those faithful disciples of Jesus, who have not been privileged to see Him in the flesh. We can still minister to Him by performing our daily duty, by acts of loving service, done from our hearts "as to the Lord and not unto men," knowing that we "shall receive of the Lord the reward of inheritance, since in helping our neighbours we most truly "serve the Lord Christ."¹

Again, the holy women went forward although they believed the sepulchre to be still closed by "the great stone." They trusted that God would come to their aid, and He, who never fails those who trust in Him, justified most amply their confidence. "Looking up they saw that the stone was rolled away." It was in this spirit that

¹ Col. iii. 23.

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Abraham answered Isaac's question concerning the victim required, by those brave words, which have consoled many an anxious soul: "My son, the Lord will provide." It was in this spirit that the priests who carried the Ark of the Lord across the Jordan went forward to the river brink. It was harvest time and the Jordan had, as usual, overflowed its banks. The silvery sheet of waters lay stretched out before them apparently barring their passage. Did they stop to reason or even to pray when they reached the river? They simply obeyed Josue's orders to *go forward*. In the face of what seemed an insurmountable obstacle, they went forward and, as soon as the priests dipped their feet in the shallow waters covering the banks, God opened out the dry path before them.

We should remember these examples when difficulties confront us. If only we faithfully continue our road, God will remove the obstacles, *if He wishes us to do that particular work*, and often for us, as for the ministering women, God asks our loving services, and when they are offered, He diverts them into another channel. The obstacles, which blocked our path, were but finger-posts pointing out where the path of true service lay for us at that moment.

May we not also take to ourselves the angel's words to these faithful women: "Why seek ye the Living One among the dead?" Too often we are guilty of this folly, we "seek the living among the dead," when we give to creatures the love which should be given to God, when we put the creature in God's place, when we seek to satisfy the boundless cravings of our intellect in pure philosophical speculations, when we strive to nourish our immortal souls with the husks which this world offers. Since we are risen with Christ our Master, be it ours "to seek the things that are above," where Jesus, the Living One, ever "sitteth at the right hand of God."

Lastly, these holy women "running to tell His disciples," remind us that we, too, can spread the news that Christ

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is risen. By a consistent Catholic life, we can bear witness to the truths of Christianity. If we be privileged to "instruct others unto righteousness," then our lot has indeed fallen "in a pleasant place," for we can imitate these faithful disciples by "running" to tell others the good news, by our fervour and zeal in making known the Catholic Faith both by word and deed.

SUMMARY FOR MEDITATION

First Prelude.—Contemplate the holy women on their way to the sepulchre. One group starts from Mount Sion, other groups come from Olivet and Bethania.

Second Prelude.—Pray for the grace of loving constancy and firm faith.

First Point.—The three holy women go to the sepulchre very early, carrying their spices. They reach the grave, and, finding the stone removed, enter the sepulchre. Not finding the Lord's Body, they run from the garden. Mary Magdalene runs on first to tell Peter and John.

Second Point.—Mary of James and Salome, having met some of their companions on their way to the sepulchre, return with them. The angels appear to them, and announce the joyful news that Jesus is risen. The women hasten to tell Peter and the disciples.

Third Point.—From the narrative of the holy women's visit to the sepulchre, we may learn : 1. To be ever ready to render loving services to our neighbours for Christ's sake. 2. To go bravely forward in spite of obstacles, assured that God will remove them or enable us to surmount them. 3. To seek God in His creatures, never to cling to them for themselves. 4. To be zealous in spreading the truths of our holy Faith.

Colloquy.—Thank God for having given His angels charge over you. Pray for courage to imitate the fidelity and courage of the holy women. Ask for grace to go forward in spite of obstacles, to be zealous in spreading the knowledge of Christ. Thank God for deigning to use you as His instrument. Beg our God to imprint His words upon your memory.

IX

ST. PETER AND ST. JOHN VISIT THE TOMB

HARMONISED NARRATIVE.—“ Mary Magdalene cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and saith to them : They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid Him. Peter, therefore, went out, and that other disciple ; and they came to the sepulchre. And they both did run, and that other disciple out-ran Peter, and came first to the sepulchre. And when he stooped down, he saw the linen cloths lying, but yet he went not in. Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre and saw the linen cloths lying. And the napkin that had been about His head, not lying with the linen cloths but apart, wrapt up into one place. Then that other disciple also went in, who came first to the sepulchre, and he saw and believed. For as yet they knew not the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead. So the disciples went away again to their homes. And Peter went away wondering in himself at that which was come to pass.”—ST. JOHN XX. ; ST. LUKE XXIV.

WHILE Mary of James, and Salome, hurry away terrified from the sepulchre in one direction, we will follow Mary Magdalene in spirit as she goes back to the Cenacle. Breathlessly she runs from the garden, past Calvary, and over the slopes of Sion. Love and fear give her wings. She takes no notice of the people whom she passes on her road. They look at her with astonishment. Perchance some persons kindly ask the cause of her sorrow, for every trait of her countenance bespeaks deep grief. She answers them not, and they conclude she is mourning for a dear one, and that,

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like many Oriental mourners, she prefers not to speak. Other passers-by, respecting her grief, ask no questions, but merely utter the customary prayer: "May the Lord of consolations comfort you! Blessed be He who comforteth mourners!" Or they addressed each other, saying: "Weep for her, all ye that are bitter of heart." Then after gazing at her, as she hurries along and wondering why a mourner should act thus, they pass on their respective ways.

Mary Magdalene heeds them not; she is deaf to all the things that touch not her Divine Master. All her thoughts are centred in Him. His Body has been taken away—this is her one thought, her one sorrow, and it fills her cup of woe to the brim. On she speeds, ever repeating to herself: "They have taken away the Lord, and we know not where they have laid Him."

At last she reaches the house of Mary, the mother of St. Mark, on the southern slopes of Sion. Here she finds St. John, and although Mary the mother of Jesus is in that house, we may presume from what we know of Mary Magdalene's unselfish love, that she would refrain from telling her that the Body of Jesus had been removed. In her ignorance, she imagined that the account of the sepulchre having been rifled—as she presumed—would add to the grief of the blessed Mother of Sorrows.

It appears as though "Simon Peter and the other disciple" were not both to be found under the same roof. This is suggested by the repetition of the preposition. We are told that "Mary Magdalene cometh *to* Simon Peter and *to the* other disciple whom Jesus loved." Or, as suggested previously, she may have found them both there, as it was now early morning, and the Apostles gathered together there at certain times.

In any case, she found the two Apostles whom she sought. It was natural for her to turn to Simon Peter. Was he not the head of the Apostolic band in spite of his

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threefold denial? Was he not a "disciple whom Jesus loved, St. John being "the other disciple" who shared this blessed distinction? It is John who gives this title to Peter; he has no desire to keep this privileged name exclusively for himself, and in speaking of the love which Jesus bore to both Peter and himself the Evangelist uses the Greek verb (*φιλέω*), which signifies the love that exists between personal friends. Such, St. John also tells us, was the love of Jesus for Lazarus and his two sisters, so that the three disciples of Jesus mentioned in the incident on which we are meditating were all specially loved by Jesus—loved with that personal affection of which every human soul has need. We do not want to be loved merely as one of a crowd, but we hunger for something more *personal and individual*. Need we envy these three blessed disciples their wondrous privilege? No, since we ourselves can attain to it, for Jesus has said: "You are my friends if you do the things that I command you"; and again: "If you keep My commandments you shall abide in My love."¹ The three links of the spiritual ascent to the friendship of Jesus are clearly given—*we obey, we abide in His love, we are His friends*.

Impetuously, Mary breaks in with her unexpected news upon the grief-stricken Apostles. Peter has wept continuously ever since Jesus looked so tenderly upon him; he cannot forgive himself, and though he has asked pardon of God, he yearns to know that his Master has pardoned him. But Jesus lies dead in the tomb and never will he receive this assurance. So he thinks, for Peter has no hope of a glorious Resurrection for His Master, so for the time being his grief is irremediable. John, too, is mourning bitterly; so far he has no expectation of ever seeing his Master alive again. God has so willed it; the incredulity and utter despair of Jesus' disciples, when they saw Him "crucified, dead and buried," were to serve as witnesses to that Resur-

¹ St. John xv. 9 *et seq.*

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rection which came to them so unexpectedly, that they, at first, rejected it.

Simon Peter and John, horrified at the tidings, lose no time in setting out for the sepulchre. They wish to assure themselves that the tomb is indeed empty. Mary's message was brief and sobs choked her utterance: "They have taken away the Lord." "*They*" have taken—she mentions no names, but we may conjecture that she refers to the enemies of Jesus. She imagines that they have carried their hatred and vengeance beyond the grave and outraged His sacred Body. Peter and John think the same: they know that none of the Apostles or disciples would have disturbed that lifeless Body. Who can have removed It? Peter—ever a man of prompt action—and St. John at once leave the house, and hurry on the way towards the sepulchre.

Mary Magdalene does not name her companions; she refers to them indirectly when she says: "*We* know not where they have laid Him," but certainly St. John knew that his mother, Salome, had gone to the sepulchre for the purpose of embalming the dead Body of Jesus. These words also show that when Mary went to Peter and John, she had as yet seen neither the Angels nor her Risen Saviour.

"They both did run together." In their sorrow they were united. Because Peter had denied his Master, the beloved Apostle did not turn from him with anger and contempt. John knew how sorely Peter had been tempted in that courtyard. Perhaps he reproached himself for having spoken to the portress on that fatal night and induced her to let Peter come in. He, too, had fled and abandoned his Master in Gethsemani, but, above all, John had drunk in from Jesus' teachings those sweet lessons of love and mercy. He knew how the Good Shepherd ever received the straying sheep and even sought them out, and John did likewise with his fallen brother Simon Peter.

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The words of St. Paul to the Galatians read like a commentary on St. John's friendship for Peter after the latter's denial, and, be it noted in passing, an injury offered to one we love dearly cuts us more deeply than any personal affront. Listen to the exhortation of the Apostle of the Gentiles: "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in any fault . . . instruct such a one in a spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so you shall fulfil the law of Christ."¹ There was a time when John—one of the Sons of Thunder—had desired to call down fire from heaven upon the Samaritans, who had refused to allow Jesus and His disciples to pass through their towns, but that was before John had stood upon Mount Calvary and heard the Lamb of God intercede for His executioners, saying repeatedly: "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do."

Simon Peter and John hasten on, at first keeping together, then, in his eagerness to verify Magdalene's words and being younger than his companion, "that other disciple outran Peter, and came first to the sepulchre." How vividly the whole scene must have come before the aged Evangelist when, some sixty years later, he described the events of that grand Resurrection morning! How true it is that, in moments of great stress and anguish, apparently insignificant details imprint themselves indelibly on the human mind!

John, having outrun Peter, reached the sepulchre almost breathless. Mary Magdalene drops out of his narrative for the moment. He stands there seized with reverent awe, and contents himself with bending down to look into the inner chamber. John notices the gravecloths lying and sees that the grave is untenanted. He cannot see the inner chamber without stooping down, for it is two or three feet lower than the vestibule. It is lighter now than when the three holy women examined the tomb,

¹ Gal. vi. 1.

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but still there is little light in that recess ; the whiteness of the shroud renders it more conspicuous than the actual tomb. As John looks at these grave-cloths, he remembers how he helped Joseph and Nicodemus to swathe the lacerated Body of the Lord. Love and awe hold John back for the moment, and, as he stands there, perhaps a dimly nascent hope rises in his soul. Jesus had said at that last Supper : " You shall see Me again and your sorrow shall be turned into joy." but if some of these consoling thoughts recurred to him, incredulity and misapprehension again acquired the mastery. As yet the disciples " knew not the Scripture," that is, they did not *believe* that their Lord would really rise. They looked forward simply to the Resurrection of the last day, and interpreted their Master's words from that point of view.

At length Peter reaches the tomb, and instantly he enters. His characteristic impetuosity reveals itself. He intends to examine the selpuchre himself. John, mastering his emotion, follows his companion. Both notice the grave-cloths through which the Body of Christ has passed, and Peter remarks that the napkin which was wound around His head is now lying " apart." St. John does not here mention our Lord by name, any more than Mary did when addressing Jesus Himself. When our minds are preoccupied with one person or thing we often act thus, concluding that those to whom we speak are as interested in the matter as we are ourselves.

St. Peter appears to have looked carefully round before St. John summoned up courage to follow him. There were no traces of violence or hasty flight : all was in order. Both gazed upon these swathing-bands, both saw the empty tomb—empty and yet full, for legions of angels kept watch there invisibly. How much more there was in that grave than what they saw ! It is ever so, for Heaven is all around us, God is " not far from any one of us," His holy angels are ever at hand to succour and defend us in all our needs.

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The two Apostles gazed upon the same material things—the empty tomb and the linen bands—but the impressions received, differed considerably. St. John records that it was while they were in the sepulchre together, looking at the place where the Lord had laid, that full faith in the Resurrection of his Master was enkindled in his soul—“*he saw and believed.*” Until this moment the meaning of those prophecies concerning the Resurrection of the Messiah had been hidden from the eyes of the disciples. Now, the empty tomb, the discarded grave-cloths explained “*the Scripture*” that “He must rise again from the dead.” St. John did not refer in these words to the collective prophecies of the Resurrection, but to some definite prediction. The expression “*the Scripture*” refers to some special passage, whereas “*the Scriptures*” always signifies the books of the Old Testament in general.

What “*Scripture*” recurred to St. John’s mind as he stood in the sepulchre on that Easter morning? The devout Jews knew the Psalms well; daily a portion was chanted by the Levites in the Temple, both after the morning and evening sacrifice. Perhaps that passage, so well known and so explicit, came before the beloved Apostle as he stood silently gazing around, and the words explained the mystery of the vanished Body: “Because Thou wilt not leave My Soul in hell, nor wilt Thou suffer Thy Holy One to see corruption.”¹ Or did St. John remember that Isaias had predicted that if the Just and Suffering Servant “shall lay down His life for sin, He shall see a long-lived seed”? To see a long-lived seed after having suffered death gives a promise of resurrection.

Whatever predictions recurred to St. John, one thing is certain, it was only when he stood before the empty tomb that he “*saw and believed.*” Then only, in virtue of the special grace of faith in that blessed mystery, did he grasp the true meaning of the sacred prophecies. There lay the

¹ Ps. xv. 10.

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grave-cloths—the Risen Master needed them no longer, the glorious body is clothed in its own raiment of light. It was the third day, and Jesus had so often repeated those solemn words, “and the third day rise again.” Often John and his fellow-Apostles had heard these predictions, but “they understood none of these things, and this word was hid from them, and they understood not the things that were said.”¹ How plain it all seemed the moment God flooded the soul of St. John with supernatural light—not indeed, as yet the fulness of the Pentecostal illumination, but a firm faith in the Resurrection of his Lord.

Doubtless the special intercourse which the beloved disciple had been privileged to have with our blessed Lady had prepared him to accept this truth. She had not prepared spices nor accompanied the three holy women to assist in embalming the dead Body of her Son. Mary, the Mother of Jesus, knew that her Son would rise again. The Angel Gabriel had prophesied that her Son “should be great,” and that He would reign in the house of Jacob *for ever* . . . “of His kingdom there should be no end.”² Elizabeth had said to her: “Blessed art thou that hast believed, because all those things shall be accomplished that were spoken to thee by the Lord.” Mary’s faith was not shaken by the terrible ordeal of Calvary, and we may presume that she strove to convince the despairing disciples that all was not lost, that Jesus would rise again. If the words of Jesus Himself were misunderstood, it is not astonishing that our Lady’s words should appear equally enigmatical. In any case, the Apostle who was the first to believe was the adopted son of Mary.

We may contemplate St. John hurrying back to the Cenacle to tell the Blessed Mother of God that on this, the third day, the sepulchre is empty, and that this must signify that Jesus has indeed risen. John “*saw and believed*”;

¹ St. Luke xviii. 34.

² *Ibid.*, i. 31.

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joy lights up his countenance as he hastens to tell our Lady the glad tidings.

“ With eager feet
He wends his way, and meets the smile of faith
Upon the Virgin Mother's face, ere he
Can tell the proofs of Resurrection. She
Had grasped the truth. Was not her Son Divine ?
Could Death enthral the Life ? And had not He
Whose Heart in sympathy had ever beat,
Answering to hers, now healed the wound the sword
Had pierced so keenly, and to her revealed
The knowledge of the new-born joy, now His,
Of having ransomed Man from Death and Hell ?
That joy for which He had endured the Cross,
Despised the shame, and sanctified for aye
Humiliation, suffering, and pain.” (S. C.)

Leaving Mary and her adopted son holding sweet intercourse concerning Jesus, let us return to Peter. St. John tells us that he and his companion, after having examined the empty sepulchre, “went away again to their own homes,” and this again seems to point to two dwellings. Peter left the sepulchre “wondering in himself at that which was come to pass.” John believed ; as yet, Peter “knew not the Scriptures that He must rise again,” but the penitent Apostle wondered and pondered over what he had seen. Often as he had heard Jesus say that He “*must* suffer many things,” and *must* accomplish the Scriptures by rising again, Peter had not grasped and could not grasp this truth.

God reveals His secrets as and when He wills, and until the Holy Ghost speaks interiorly to the soul, until He, receiving the things of Jesus, shows them unto us, it is impossible for us to rise to the comprehension of supernatural truths.” Faith is a gift of God,” and “the Spirit breatheth where He will.” John “*saw and believed,*” while Peter “*saw and wondered.*” This phenomenon may frequently be observed ; one soul sees the beauties and reasonableness of the Catholic Faith and receives the gift

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of faith where another wonders and remains incredulous. One soul hears the call to ascend higher in the spiritual life, while another, though hearing it, does not understand, and remains on a lower plane. Doubtless, we may attribute John's immediate belief to a special grace given in reward to his fidelity, as well as to the influence of our Immaculate Mother. Nor must we pass over the differences in the characters of the two Apostles. Friends as they were, their friendship was based on contrasts rather than on resemblances.

John was of a receptive, contemplative character, with a deep spiritual insight into the things of God. Fidelity to duty characterised him, thus he left St. John the Baptist the moment the latter pointed out Jesus as the Messiah. He gave up all for Christ, and showed his deep love for his Master by standing close to the cross with the Mother of Sorrows. In his youth he was "a son of thunder," but as grace and years of labours for Christ did their work, he became the Apostle of love. Fittingly is he, who had such a deep penetration into the Divine Mysteries, symbolised by an eagle.

Peter was energetic, enterprising to a fault, but devoted, like St. John, to our Lord. Peter's strong, ardent love often led him to overstep the bounds of respect, as when he *rebuked* our Lord for speaking of the Passion. But Peter had a strong will, courage to endure for his Master, and, if he failed in the high priest's house, it was because he had presumed too much on his own strength, and "pride goeth before a fall." Peter never failed in *love* for his Master. The bitter experience of that night seems to have borne fruit, for Peter did not, with his usual vehemence, declare that someone had certainly taken the Body away, that there could be no question of Resurrection; more humble after his sin, he went home "wondering." But the first gleam of light had lit up his darkness, soon the joyful news of the Resurrection would be explicitly pro-

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mulgated, and before the sun set on that glorious Easter day, Peter had seen and conversed with his Risen Lord.

SUMMARY FOR MEDITATION

First Prelude.—Contemplate St. Mary Magdalene, as she runs from the garden to tell Simon Peter and John that the Lord's body is no longer in the sepulchre.

Second Prelude.—Ask for grace to seek Jesus earnestly, to strive to know Him daily better, never to rest—should we have the misfortune to lose His interior Presence by mortal sin—until we have found Him again by contrition and absolution.

First Point.—Mary Magdalene hurries from the sepulchre. She finds Simon Peter and John, and tells them her grief: "They have taken away the Lord's body, and we know not where they have laid Him."

Second Point.—Peter and John go at once to the garden. John outruns Peter, and waits for him at the sepulchre. Peter arrives, enters, and examines the empty tomb. John also goes in. They see the grave-cloths and the empty tomb.

Third Point.—Note the different effects produced by the sight. John *sees and believes* in the Resurrection; he hurries home to tell our Lady, who has full faith in this blessed mystery. Peter *sees and wonders*. God gives spiritual discernment *as He wills, when and to whom* He chooses.

Colloquy.—Ask for the gift of a firm faith and hope in God's promises. Pray for grace to look upon all earthly things in their true bearing upon our eternal salvation. Pray for intelligence in the things of God, and for docility to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit. Invoke our Lady and these two Apostles, that by their intercession you may hold fast to God's promises.

X

JESUS APPEARS TO ST. MARY MAGDALENE

HARMONISED NARRATIVE.—“But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping. Whilst she was then weeping, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre. And she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had been laid. They say to her: Woman, why weepest thou? She said to them: Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him. When she had said these words, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and she knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her: Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, thinking that it was the gardener, saith to Him: Sir, if thou hast taken Him away, tell me where thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away. Jesus saith to her: Mary. She, turning, saith to Him: Rabboni, that is to say, Master. Jesus saith to her: Do not touch me; for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren, and say to them: I ascend to My Father and to your Father, to My God and to your God. But He rising early the first day of the week, appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven devils. She went and told them that had been with Him, the disciples who were mourning and weeping: I have seen the Lord, and these things He said to me. And they hearing that He was alive, and had been seen by her, did not believe.”—ST. JOHN XX.; ST. MARK XVI.

AFTER Peter and John had gone “away again to their homes,” Mary Magdalene, who had returned to the garden, stood by the sepulchre weeping. St. Augustine remarks that “a stronger affection chained to the spot, one of a weaker nature.” This brave, loving follower of Jesus could not make up her mind to leave the sepulchre. She remained there the very image of grief, all hope now engulfed in her Lethe of woe. Watch her as she

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keeps her vigil. Well may she grieve, for Jesus was her All-in-All, and, as she imagines, He is still numbered with the dead. Not only has He passed out of her life, but His sacred Body has been removed. When our dear ones have left us, we treasure their portraits or some little thing which was once theirs. These objects have a special value, since they remind us of those whom God has called hence, these keepsakes seem like links which, in a sense, keep them near to us. Of these treasured objects to which the heart clings, the mortal remains—the ashes of the dead—hold the first place. Thus when a man is drowned at sea and his body cannot be recovered, it adds to the sorrow of his relatives—they cannot even visit his tomb and pray beside it. Something of Jesus remained for Mary, as long as she could show her love and respect to His dead Body. Now that was gone she remains by the sepulchre weeping aloud.

“Blessed are they that mourn” for the absence of Jesus; “the tears shed for Christ do not lose their reward, nor is it long before love for Him bears fruit—nay, rather will grace and swift recompense follow speedily in the train of pain.”¹ But Mary’s grief does not reduce her to inaction; she is determined to find her Divine Master—to save His precious Body from insults. We may apply to this ardent lover of Jesus, the words of the Spouse of Christ in the Canticle of Canticles: “In my bed by night, I sought Him whom my soul loveth; I sought Him, and found Him not. I will rise and go about the city. In the streets and broad ways I will seek Him whom my soul loveth: I sought Him, and found Him not.”²

Once more Mary stoops down and looks into the sepulchre. Is it really empty? Has not the body been put back? Seeking the dead, Mary finds the living—not as yet, indeed, her Beloved, but His messenger of hope. There, in the inner chamber, keeping watch over “the place where the Lord had laid,” two angels were seated, “one at the head and the other at the feet” of the empty

¹ St. Cyprian in Joan, lib. xii.

² Cant. iii. 1.



Photo Anderson.

Jesus appears to St. Mary Magdalen.

Jesus appears to St. Mary Magdalene

grave. The grave-cloths were still there; angels were there, but Mary sees not her Lord. Before manifesting Himself to her, He desires to prepare her soul for that blessed vision. The effulgence of the angelic sentinels lit up that hallowed cave. As "one cherub on the one side, and the other on the other side, stood over the Ark of the Testimony" ¹ in the Holy of Holies, so these Angels of the Resurrection kept their watch in the sepulchre, guarding it from the foes of Jesus, and waiting there to console His faithful disciples. God the Father has given His Angels charge concerning Him; they have a blessed work to do for their Master. Joyfully they fulfil His commands, as ready to deliver a message of love to the woman who had been a sinner, out of whom Jesus had cast seven devils, as to announce the mystery of the Incarnation to the pure, lowly Virgin of Nazareth, for "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent to minister for them, who shall receive the inheritance of salvation?" ²

The Angels are the first to break the solemn silence. Sitting in all their majestic beauty, they ask one question: "Woman, why weepest thou?" They knew well. Had they not witnessed the awful tragedy of Calvary? Did they not know that the Lord had risen, whose Body she was seeking? Yes, these blessed spirits knew the cause of her sorrow, but they ask the question in order to show their sympathy and to console her by giving her an opportunity of telling them her sorrow. The Angels of God, who share our joys, who rejoice over the conversion of a sinner, are not indifferent to the tears of men, they are our fellow servants and our brethren.³

Mary Magdalene answers their question in all simplicity: "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him." She manifests no fear or excitement on seeing these Angels—she seems to treat them as men and almost with indifference. Why was this, why does she behave so differently from the other

¹ Exod. xxv. 22.

² Heb. i. 14.

³ Cf. Apoc. xxii. 9.

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holy women? "They were afraid and bowed down . . . to the ground," so that the Angel had to reassure them saying, "Fear not you." Mary is not terrified, because one idea has taken possession of her mind—they have taken away her Lord and she must find Him. She is indifferent to all except her Divine Master. To a soul that seeks God, angels cannot suffice. We have an example of calmness in presence of an angelic messenger very similar in the narrative of Agar's grief when the boy Ismael was dying of thirst "in the wilderness of Bersabee."¹ Having placed her child "under one of the trees . . . she sat over against him a great way off . . . for she said, "I will not see the boy die," and there the desolate mother "lifted up her voice and wept." But God had compassion upon her, and "an Angel of God called to Agar from heaven, saying: "What art thou doing, Agar? fear not; for God hath heard the voice of the boy." Then "God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water," and her child's life was spared. Agar feared for her boy, but she manifested no terror upon hearing the Angel's voice, because one thought alone was present to her mind—the fate of her child.

"They have taken away." Mary had used the same words to the two Apostles, and certainly they knew to whom Mary referred. But she does not stop to reflect that these two angels might require some further explanation. Nor did they, in truth, for, as we have said above, legions of angels were present in Gethsemani, in the Prætorium, on Calvary, in Joseph's garden when Jesus was laid to rest. Mary Magdalene speaks for herself now, hence she says: "*my Lord*" and "*I know not where they have laid Him.*" The personal note predominates, and naturally, for when speaking to the Apostles, she related what she and her two companions had discovered, whereas here she merely answers the angel's sympathetic question.

How truly Jesus was the *personal* Friend of Mary Magdalene! Well might she call Him "*my Lord,*" for

¹ Gen. xxi. 14 *et seq.*

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He had forgiven her "many sins, raised her from the lowest stage of social degradation, and admitted her into the band of ministering women. He "loved Lazarus and Martha and Mary." He had often stayed with them in Bethania ; He had raised Lazarus from the dead. In return, Mary Magdalene loved Jesus with all the powers of her soul. He Himself praised her because she "loved much." How blessed are those who strive to attain to this life of intimate personal union with Christ. Those who cannot think of Jesus otherwise than as *the* Saviour and *the* Lord, have not the same loving confidence and intimate fellowship with Him which is granted to the soul that sees in Jesus a *personal* Saviour. The Spouse in the Canticle speaks of *her* Beloved, Mary Magdalene sought *her* Lord, St. Thomas recognised Jesus as *his* Lord and *his* God, our Immaculate Mother rejoiced in God *her* Saviour.

"I know not where they have laid *Him*." She does not mention Him by name ; because her soul is full of the thought of Jesus, she imagines that those to whom she speaks are equally occupied with Him. Having said these words, Mary "turned herself back." She had no desire to continue the conversation ; she desired to seek her Lord's dead Body. St. John no doubt learnt from St. Mary Magdalene herself, the details of the scene he describes so graphically, that it seems to take place in our presence.

At this moment, Mary Magdalene "saw Jesus standing," but she did not recognise Him. He had been there all the time, as He is ever close to those who suffer and who seek Him. He is waiting to fulfil the Divine promise : "Before they call, I will hear ; as they are yet speaking, I will hear."¹ Though in the very presence of her Risen Saviour, Mary Magdalene as yet "knew not that it was Jesus." As we contemplate this touching scene, as we look at the group standing before that empty tomb, what thoughts rush in upon us ! What reverent awe fills our souls ! We note the garden flooded with the rays of the morning sun,

¹ Isa. lxxv. 24.

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lighting up the Sepulchre, and close to it we see Mary Magdalene, the sorrow-stricken, faithful penitent ; behind her stand the two angels, in front of her, the Incarnate Son of God, the Risen Saviour.

Her Lord was so close to her, the One for whom she wept so bitterly, and, like Rachel "weeping for her children, would not be comforted" until she had found His sacred Body. How tenderly the Risen Saviour looked upon this loving disciple, whose yearning desire to possess her Lord once more—even though dead—excluded all else from her mind. Jesus loved and pitied her. As the Spouse of the Canticles exclaims: "Behold, He standeth behind our wall looking through the windows, looking through the lattices."¹ But He willed to prepare Mary Magdalene for the revelation of Himself, to deepen her longing that He might satisfy it more fully.

Various reasons have been suggested by the Fathers as to why Mary Magdalene did not recognise Jesus—for example, it has been conjectured that she did not look up, that grief blinded her eyes and benumbed her faculties, that Jesus' glorious body had changed Its appearance, that He showed Himself under another form, that her "eyes were held," like those of the disciples of Emmaus. As various causes frequently combine to produce a given effect, several of these explanations may be correct. In any case, Mary Magdalene, in common with the Apostles, had not the slightest hope of ever seeing her Lord alive again. It was true that Lazarus had come back from the grave ; Jesus had called him forth, but who could raise Jesus Himself ? The Crucifixion and Death of Jesus appear to have completely extinguished the faint and intermittent sparks of faith which His disciples had had in his Divinity. If Simon Peter and Martha alike confessed their faith in Christ as "the Son of the Living God," it is certain that they did not realise the full import of their confession. In each case the sudden interior illumination which had

¹ Cant. v. 17.

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caused them to make their act of faith in the Divinity of Christ, had given place to a darkness which might be felt, like that which of old overshadowed Egypt and like it, this darkness "*lasted three days.*" What is true of St. Peter and Martha, applies with equal force to the rest of the disciples.

Mary Magdalene therefore did not expect to see Jesus alive, and as it has been truly said: "We see only that which we have the inward power of seeing." Seeking her dead Lord, Mary Magdalene had turned away from her companions and even from the Angels. It has been asked: "Why did she not question the Angels and beg their assistance?" St. John Chrysostom conjectures that Mary "turned herself back" when she had answered the Angels' question, because she noticed a wondrous expression of awe and reverence upon the countenance of these heavenly sentinels, and she turned back to see whom they were thus reverencing. Again, if as we know by experience, we often have an intuitive consciousness of the presence of a person without having seen or heard him, how much more would this hold good of the Incarnate Son of God?

Jesus addresses His faithful disciple. He saith to her: "Woman, why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou?" It is ever a blessed moment when Jesus speaks to the soul, even though, at first, she does not recognise His voice. Our Lord's question amplifies that put by the Angels. He shows that He knows she is seeking a person—not a thing merely. By thus interpreting her grief and revealing His sympathy, He wins her confidence. Mary does not, as yet, recognise His voice: she takes this unknown stranger to be Joseph's gardener, and consequently a friend. "She saith to Him: Sir, if thou hast taken Him away, tell me where thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away."

Still the *dead* Body is the one object of her search. She can rise no higher as yet. Though the Living One stands beside her, she persists in seeking the dead. How lightly she estimates, or rather passes, over difficulties. "*I will take Him away.*" Love knows no obstacles, admits no impos-

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sibilities, and Mary Magdalene stands out as a type of that true charity which "beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things."¹ Her brave love will have its reward, though not in the way that she thinks.

Mary Magdalene takes Jesus to be the gardener, and in truth He is the Divine Gardener who cultivates the enclosed garden of His Church. He is "the Dresser of the vineyard." In the garden of His Church He sows the seed of virtues and cultivates the choicest flowers—there we find saints, martyrs, virgins, confessors. Every virtue that blooms in the soul of a Christian is due to the Divine Gardener's planting and toil. Jesus is also the Gardener of Nature, since "in Him were all things created in heaven and in earth, visible and invisible . . . all things were created by Him and in Him (*i.e.* unto His Glory)." ² Jesus shares the title of Creator with the Eternal Father and the Holy Ghost. This being so, every flower that perfumes the air, every tree that waves in the wind, is the actual work of Jesus, the Divine Gardener. St. Ignatius develops this thought in the fourth week (or part) of His Spiritual Exercises, where he represents God as living and working in all created things. It is a great help to a spiritual life, when we learn to rise to Nature's God. This explains how some saints fell into an ecstasy, when contemplating a simple flower. A devout writer has truly said: "Every flower that blows was once a thought in the mind of my Saviour, and every wave of loveliness that charms me began in Him, passed on, at last reached my heart as its strand and broke there."

Once more, we note how Mary, addressing the supposed gardener, still speaks of her Lord as "Him." She mentions no name, for Joseph's servant will surely know of whom she is speaking, whom she is seeking, and who, unknown to Mary, is seeking her.

The rapturous moment of the manifestation is now close at hand. The prophetic words will be realised: "If

¹ 1 Cor. xiii. 7.

² Col. i. 16.

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the vision make any delay, wait for it, for it shall surely come and shall not be slack.”¹ It is written that “the Son of Man *must* suffer many things”: it is also written that “He must rise again from the dead” on the third day. That glorious day has dawned; the Risen Saviour stands beside His sorrowful disciple. She has wept enough, the moment has come in which He has determined to reward her fidelity by revealing His Presence.

“*Jesus saith to her, Mary,*” and Mary Magdalene, falling at His feet, can utter but one word—“Rabboni!” No human words can express her ecstatic joy. Jesus said but one word. He called her by her name—He no longer addressed her as “Woman,” but with the former loving familiarity He says: “Mary.” As He utters her name, she recognises the sweet voice of her Lord. What memories it recalls!

“*Jesus saith to her, Mary,*” and instantly Divine light fills her soul; she recognises her living Saviour. He had called His sheep by name. He had said but one word, but that creative word had rolled back the billows of woe which had submerged her soul. Prostrate at His feet, Mary adores.

“*Jesus saith to her, Mary.*” Vision and voice are now blended, and they secure recognition. One word suffices, for in solemn moments words are ever few and pregnant.

Jesus uttered but one word, but that word was her name, “as though He would say to her: Dost thou recognise Him, who recognises thee?” (St. Gregory). Once more Mary Magdalene hears that blessed voice

“ Whose tones

Had ever seemed to touch her inner chords
Of being, thrills her now; for, as of old,
He calls her Mary, and the sudden change
From grief to joy breaks down all self-restraint.
‘Rabboni!’ is her cry: and human love,
That ever seeks to grasp for self the thing
It loves, moves her to seize His Hand, or press
Enraptured kisses on His sacred Feet.” (S. C.)

¹ Hab. ii. 3.

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“*Mary saith to Him, Rabboni!*” Jesus had revealed Himself by His voice. Even as “the Spirit breatheth where He will” and faithful souls hear His voice, so Mary recognises Jesus by His voice. The Risen Saviour manifests Himself differently to His disciples, ever choosing that which is best suited for each. To the Apostles He grants the recognition of *sight*; to Thomas He gives the testimony of *touch*, while the disciples of Emmaus “knew Him” in *the breaking of bread*. It is thus He ever deals with His own, choosing those means of manifesting Himself which will the most effectually accomplish His Divine purpose in those souls. “*Mary saith to Him, Rabboni,*” my Master! and that word expresses all she would say—could she find utterance—to her Saviour, Lord, and Friend. In that single word, Jesus reads her penitence, devotedness, and true love.

While Mary Magdalene knelt at Jesus’ feet, clinging to them—for the Greek verb rendered “touch” has this meaning—prostrating herself as she had done in days gone by, Jesus speaks again.

“*Touch Me not, for I have not yet ascended to My Father.*” Much has been written on this prohibition both by early and later Christian writers. Why was it given? Perhaps the Risen Saviour wished to raise

“Her warm affection far above the gusts
Of human passion, that can never yield
Full satisfaction to the soul which God
Claims for Himself.”

St. John Chrysostom holds this view. He writes: “Methinks that she wished still to converse with Him as before, but that in her joy she perceived nothing greater in Him, although He had become more excellent in the flesh. To lead her to grasp this idea, and that she might speak to Him with great reverence—for neither with the disciples doth He appear so familiar as before—He raiseth her thoughts, that she may give Him greater marks of rever-

Jesus appears to St. Mary Magdalene

ence.”¹ St. Augustine has the same thought ; he says that our Lord wished to teach Mary that her love was not sufficiently spiritual, for “ those who touch Him aright, touch Him as ascending to the Father, as abiding in the Father, as equal to the Father.”

On the other hand, if the ministering women were permitted to hold His sacred feet, why was Mary Magdalene forbidden to do so ? Her touch could not defile His glorified Humanity, any more than the mud, on which the sunlight falls, defiles its beams. Lepers had touched Him when He went about doing good ; Judas had kissed Him in Gethsemani. Jesus invited His Apostles to touch and handle Him when He manifested Himself to them on Easter Sunday. Yet to Mary Magdalene, who had been so faithful to Him on Calvary, Jesus says, “ Touch Me not.” These considerations have decided some writers to take another view. The prohibition is explained by what follows : “ *for* I am not yet ascended to My Father.” They think it is as though our Lord had said : “ Do not rest now at My feet ; you can do that later, for this is not the only time that you will see Me, I shall not at once ascend to My Father.”

Perhaps both interpretations may be true, for the one does not exclude the other. In the first enthusiasm of her newly-found joy, it was natural that Mary should take her accustomed place at the feet of Jesus—there where she had found peace, pardon, and the happiness of sweet converse with Him. It was perfectly natural she should seek to assure herself that she saw no phantom, that she should wish to detain Him. But Mary Magdalene, like the Apostles, had to learn that the former relations with the Lord were never to be renewed. His victory over death was not to be followed—as in the case of Lazarus—by a resumption of an earthly life under the ordinary conditions. Jesus’ disciples began to learn this difficult lesson on Easter Sunday, but they did not master it completely until the

¹ Hom. lxxxvi.

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Day of Pentecost. We were not present in that hallowed garden when Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene, we have never been privileged to touch His sacred feet, nevertheless, in a very real sense, we too can touch the Risen Saviour, not once merely but as often as we will. When Jesus lived among men, when He preached to vast multitudes, the people pressed around and touched Him continually. But out of all these vast throngs Jesus could distinguish those who came in physical contact with Him from those who touched Him by faith, so that virtue went forth from Him and healed their souls and bodies. A living faith is the true Christian's point of contact with the Risen Saviour ; it is by faith that we touch Him in the Holy Eucharist.

After all, is not each communion an epiphany of Jesus to the soul of the disciple ? At the altar rails before the tabernacle, is not the moving scene of the manifestation of the Risen Christ to Mary Magdalene repeated ? There we find devout Catholics in adoration, there, too, are the adoring angels, and there Jesus is truly and really present, manifesting Himself to those who have faith to discern the Lord's Body.

" Touch Me not, for I am not yet ascended to My Father." The coming of the Paraclete could not be granted until Christ had taken His seat at the right hand of the Father. It was expedient for the disciples that Jesus should depart. During the great forty days, Jesus gradually prepared His disciples for His final departure by not renewing the former continued intercourse. Mary Magdalene has but just recognised her lost Master when He sends her from Him on a message of zeal and love.

With infinite tenderness Jesus bends over her and says : " Cease to hold Me." He has work for her to do : " But go to My brethren and say to them : I ascend to My Father and to your Father ; to My God, and to your God." It is not the time for contemplation when the disciples were still " mourning and weeping " for their crucified Master. Note the exquisite tenderness of our Lord's message. He

Jesus appears to St. Mary Magdalene

is not ashamed to call these poor, illiterate fishermen "His brethren." Although one has denied and all have deserted Him, they are still "His brethren." He gives them a name of honour, which we do not find Him giving them before His Passion. He had called them "*friends*" but not "*brethren*."

"*Go, tell My brethren*"; *Go* is the co-relative of "*come*." We come to our Lord to learn of Him, to nourish our souls by His grace, then we "*go*" to our fellows with a message of love from Him. Happy the lives that are thus spent, for those who so live are sure to hear the final welcome, "*Come, ye blessed of My Father*," which will be the gage of their eternal union with Him.

"*I ascend to My Father and to your Father*." The Ascension was to be the complement of the Resurrection, and Jesus would then return to His Father—*His* by nature and essence, *ours* by adoption and grace.

"*I ascend to My God and your God*." Jesus glorified in Heaven is still perfect Man and, as such, God is His God. The Humanity of Christ is the link which unites us to Him and makes us His brethren, and His God our God. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort,"¹ who deigns to accept us as His sons; as the adopted brethren of Jesus.

Mary hastens to do her Risen Lord's bidding, glad to be the messenger of Jesus. Watch her as, for the second time, she runs to the Cenacle, where we may presume the Apostles to be assembled. She had gone previously as the bearer of bad tidings—or rather what she considered to be such—but now, how different is her message! "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings and that preacheth peace, of him that showeth forth good . . . that saith to Sion: Thy God shall reign."²

Mary Magdalene reaches the Hill of Sion, she rushes

¹ 2 Cor. i. 3.

² Isa. lii. 7.

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into the room where the disciples, still "mourning and weeping," sit cowering together "for fear of the Jews," as well as for the death of their Lord; moreover, His Body has been removed from the sepulchre, and this has renewed their sorrow. She announces the joyful news: "The Lord is risen indeed!" She proclaims that Christ, their God, shall reign.

How is her communication received? With fear and incredulity. The "words seemed to them as idle tales, and they did not believe them." The news was too good to be true; their grief was too deep, the event so totally unexpected. The transition from utter despair to the greatest joy needed a certain preparation, time, and more substantial proofs than the word of one woman. Doubtless, they attributed Mary's faith in the Resurrection to an imagination overwrought with sleeplessness and grief.

However, the Master was preparing them for His visit. They knew the tomb was empty; Mary Magdalene had said she had seen Him, and her story was soon to be corroborated by the other holy women. So far, the Apostles have no recollection of the predictions of Jesus concerning His Resurrection: "His word" was still "hid from them."

But where was St. John? He already had faith in the Resurrection. Perhaps he was with the Blessed Mother of God. We may be sure that Mary Magdalene hastened to her after having delivered her message to the Apostles and disciples. Here the good news was accepted, for, according to an ancient tradition, Mary was the first to whom the Risen Saviour appeared on that glorious Easter Day. Our Immaculate Mother and Mary Magdalene rejoiced together, and the joy that filled their souls was a foretaste of Heaven. They praise God together, who has wiped away "all tears from their eyes"; Mary Magdalene rejoices for her loved Master's sake; our Lady rejoices for her Divine Son, for whom "death shall be no more, nor mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow shall be any more, for the former things are passed away."

Jesus appears to St. Mary Magdalene

SUMMARY FOR MEDITATION

First Prelude.—Contemplate St. Mary Magdalene as she stands weeping close to the sepulchre.

Second Prelude.—Ask for grace ever to recognise Him who never fails to recognise us individually.

First Point.—Mary remains weeping at the sepulchre after Peter and John have left. The angels appear. They question Mary, who replies briefly.

Second Point.—On turning round, Mary Magdalene sees the Risen Saviour, but thinks Him to be the gardener. He questions her. She replies. He reveals Himself.

Third Point.—Mary Magdalene clings to His sacred feet. Jesus says, "Touch Me not." He sends a message to His brethren. Mary Magdalene gives it, but is disbelieved.

Colloquy.—Adore the Risen Saviour in union with Mary and the angels. Ask that your soul may be filled with love and loyalty for Him, that nothing less than Himself may ever satisfy you. Pray for the grace to recognise Jesus, whatever disguise He may assume. Ask that you may always cling to Him by faith, that your devotedness may not depend upon exterior consolations. Beg our Lord to use you as His messenger to the brethren. Congratulate our Lady on the Resurrection of her Son.

XI

JESUS APPEARS TO THE HOLY WOMEN

HARMONISED NARRATIVE.—“And the women went out quickly from the sepulchre, running to tell His disciples. And, behold, Jesus met them saying : All hail. But they came up, and took hold of His feet, and worshipped Him. Then Jesus saith to them : Be not afraid. Go, tell my brethren, that they go into Galilee ; there they shall see Me. And going back from the sepulchre, they told all these things to the Eleven, and to the rest. Now it was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary, the mother of James, and the other women that were with them, that told these things to the Apostles. And these words seemed to them as an idle tale ; and they did not believe them.”—ST. MATT. XXVIII. ; ST. LUKE XXIV.

WE will now resume our contemplation on the holy women who went to the sepulchre very early on Easter morning. We have seen how, after the Angels had announced the Resurrection to them, they had fled with mingled fear and joy to tell His disciples. The various groups had previously met either at the sepulchre or on the road leading to it, and the united bands at once hastened to deliver the joyful news to Christ's Apostles and disciples. This was probably the second time they had fled from the sepulchre. The first time they had hastened to give the sad news of the Sacred Body having disappeared. Meeting their friends on the way thither, Mary of James and Salome had returned with them, while Mary Magdalene, having quitted the garden alone, was hurrying to inform Peter and John of this fresh calamity. On their returning to the grave, the Angels had appeared and announced the joyful event. In obedience to the angelic bidding the women went away at once “running to tell His disciples.

Jesus appears to the Holy Women

The first time they fled from the sepulchre fear filled their souls, the second time they were overcome with fear and great joy"; shortly after, when Jesus appeared to them, fear yielded to the most intense happiness, for had not He risen indeed?

Mary Magdalene was the "first" of the ministering women to whom Jesus appeared. St. John had had what we may call an *interior* manifestation of the Risen Saviour, since we are told that he *believed* when he saw the empty grave and the white linen cloths discarded, Peter had left the sepulchre "wondering in himself," and our Blessed Lady had already seen her Divine Son. The second manifestation recorded in the Gospels was granted to the holy women. Thus our Lady and all the ministering women saw our Lord on Easter Day before any of the Apostles or male disciples of Jesus had this inestimable privilege.

We will consider what took place at this blessed meeting. The holy women run to announce the glad tidings. They are all together so far; doubtless they purpose separating when they reach the western gate and enter Jerusalem, so as to spread the news more quickly. But a precious grace is reserved for them as, in obedience to the Angel's command, they turn to leave the garden. Behold! to their joy and surprise, "Jesus met them, saying: All hail." He has chosen them to be among the first witnesses to His Resurrection. The well-known Hebrew greeting fell upon their ears. They had heard Him repeat it so often. "All hail." Jesus had said: "I will see you again, and your hearts shall rejoice."¹ Now He greets them, saying "All hail" (literally, "Rejoice ye," *Χαίρετε*). He at once sounds the Easter note of joy, which the Church was to catch up and prolong down through long ages by her triumphant Easter "Alleluia."

"Behold!" The meeting was a great surprise, for the Angel had held out no hope of their seeing Him until after their return to Galilee. "*Jesus met them,*" just as He often meets us and grants us some grace when we are

¹ St. John xvi. 22.

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hurrying to accomplish the commands of our lawful superiors—His messengers; though often they know it not. Whenever we fulfil an errand of zeal and loving-kindness it is true to say that, not only does Jesus meet us but He goes with us on the road, for then our souls are prepared for His visit; then, too, they require His assistance and companionship: without Him we can do nothing.

“*Jesus met them.*” Like Mary Magdalene these holy women had gone to the sepulchre before daybreak. Full of love for their dead Master, they had sought His sepulchre, and marvellously were the inspired words realised: “I love them that love Me, and they that, in the morning, early watch for Me shall find Me.”¹

“*They came up*” to Him: they were not all together but separated in different groups. “They came up,” and gathered round their Lord. All fixed their eyes upon Him. Yes, it was their Lord Himself. He had risen indeed. The last time they had gazed upon Him, His features were rigid in death’s embrace, His face was scarred with the fists of His enemies and the cruel thorns. Now He was radiant with glory; the glorified Soul shone, as it were, through His risen Body. He had passed through Death’s portals, He had returned a conqueror. It was truly He Himself; they recognised Him by His voice and His form, and yet He was so inexpressibly changed. The hands and feet were still imprinted with the stigmata, and this increased their supernatural beauty. Jesus, their Master, stood before them manifesting Himself to His faithful servants, both as the Son of man and the Son of God.

The recognition was instantaneous; spontaneously they “*took hold of His feet and worshipped Him.*” Each and all obeyed that instinctive and imperative need which the faithful disciple ever experiences when the Presence of Jesus makes Itself felt—*Venite adoremus!* What words can portray their happiness when they thus entered into the joy of their Risen Lord? The deep cloud of sorrow, the thick darkness that enveloped their souls, was instantly dispelled by

¹ Prov. viii. 17.

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the rising of the Sun of Justice. Their devoted, loving service then received its full reward, and though sorrow had endured for a night, that Easter morning brought fulness of joy.

They took hold of His feet—those blessed feet which the cruel nails had riven, those feet whence the Precious Blood had welled forth. Claspings them tenderly, and pressing their lips to the marks of the wounds, they *worshipped* Him.

Undoubtedly, in this solemn moment, these ministering women were enlightened concerning His Divinity. They worshipped Him as the Son of God, the Redeemer of Israel. They asked no questions ; they could but kneel and adore in silence, and this is the truest worship the creature can offer to the Creator. “ Then Jesus saith to them : *Be not afraid.*” How often had they heard these words of peace from His lips. “ Be not afraid ! ” The Prince of Peace had ever comforted and consoled His timid disciples. Perhaps in the minds of some of those who knelt at His feet there may have been a lurking, unconfessed fear : “ Is it really my Lord, is it not all a dream ? ” Jesus’ words dispelled all such doubts—the Lord had risen indeed.

But the Master did not intend them to remain thus with Him. He had work for them to do, therefore, having allowed them time to assure themselves of His identity, that it was no phantom, He sent them on an errand of love : “ *Go tell My brethren that they go to Galilee ; there they shall see Me.*” Like St. Mary Magdalene, they were charged with an assurance of His forgiveness, a proof of love to His disciples, whom He condescended to call His brethren. Though they had denied and forsaken Him they were still *His brethren* ; He yearned to console them by assuring them of His Resurrection and His unchanged love. He knew how sorrowful, repentant, and hopeless they were. He had called them His “ friends ” at the Last Supper, but the announcement of the closer bond expressed by the word “ brethren ” was reserved for this Easter message of hope and love.

“ *Tell My brethren that they go to Galilee* ” (literally, “ in order that they depart ”). The sequence of events and the

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actual circumstances prove that Jesus did not intend them to set out at once. The Pasch was not yet over. Some pilgrims left on the fourth day of the feast, but all, who could do so, remained the whole eight days, and we know that the Eleven and the disciples were in Jerusalem on the eighth day after Jesus' Resurrection. Moreover, the pilgrims generally travelled in caravans, and the larger parties set off homewards on the ninth day after the Paschal celebration.

The manifestations of the Risen Saviour took place both in Judea and Galilee. The first six and the last were made in Judea. Four are recorded as having taken place in Galilee, but doubtless there were many more of which Scripture has given us no record, for Jesus remained forty days upon earth after His Resurrection, and during the greater part of this time, His disciples appear to have been in Galilee. St. Luke tells us that Jesus "showed Himself alive after His Passion by many proofs, for forty days appearing to them, and speaking of the kingdom of God."¹ These words justify us in concluding that there were other apparitions of Jesus, which are not recorded in the Scriptures—especially to His Apostles—and that the greater number of these took place in Galilee. However, since our Lord's Body was glorified, He could also have appeared in Judea during these days the Apostles spent in Galilee, for the glorified Body of Jesus was not subject to the laws of time, space or matter.

"*There they shall see Me.*" It was in Galilee that all the Apostles had been called to follow Jesus; there He had worked the greater number of His mighty signs, and it was there that Jesus formally appointed to meet them. In Galilee, Jesus would complete their instruction and tell them how He would have them found and govern the Church militant. After His Ascension, they would take up a new life and commence their active period of Apostleship in Jerusalem.

"*There shall they see Me*": what a blessed promise,

¹ Acts i. 3.

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one, thank God, which our Lord has made to every faithful disciple. Though we cannot realise it as yet, still in God's appointed time, after perhaps years of patient suffering and loving service,

“ Our eyes at length shall see Him
Through His own redeeming love.”

It matters little when the apparition comes, provided that, like good and faithful servants, we be found “ nothing wanting in any grace, waiting for the manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ.”¹

“ They shall see *Me*.” Jesus was the same ; the passage from death to life had not changed His character. He is “ the same yesterday, to-day, for ever.” It was no stranger, no phantom body that appeared to the disciples, but their very own Master, who had risen again. One day we shall see this same Jesus coming in majesty to judge the living and the dead. He showed Himself to be the same by His loving condescension, His unaltered friendships, His renewed promises. In all reverence, we may say that, had the disciples found our dear Lord completely changed towards them, and totally unlike the Master, whom they had lived and conversed with for three years, they would never have had such fulness of joy, nor would their faith in His Resurrection have been so firm. The very object of the *many* and *varied* proofs of His being truly risen had for object to show them that it was really He. He had sent His messengers saying : “ You shall see *Me* again,” and when He had fulfilled His promise they could testify that the Lord was risen *indeed*—He Himself and no other.

For us, His disciples, death will effect no radical transformation in our characters. We shall rise purified, perfected, ennobled, but still our own selves. The saints will retain their own personal characters—Peter ardent, John loving ; our loved ones, whom God has called hence to Himself, will be themselves. Though perfected in sanctity

¹ 1 Cor. i. 7.

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they will not be unrecognisable. The body—the very same—sown in corruption is raised in incorruption ; the glorified soul retains its identity. In Heaven we shall, in the Son of God, recognise the Saviour revealed by the Gospels ; there we shall know our dear ones again, and thus our joy will be full.

The ministering women, having received the Saviour's message, went "back from the sepulchre." They hurried to tell "all these things to the Eleven and to the rest." Evidently the Eleven and the rest, *i.e.* the seventy-two disciples and others, were not all together. The women separated and turned their steps to various parts of the city and suburbs seeking the disciples of Jesus. How joyfully they went, glad to be the messengers of such unexpected, good tidings, little thinking to find their words disbelieved. As the Gospel refers several times to "*many*" women having followed Jesus from Galilee, to "*many*" women who watched on Calvary afar off, and who followed Him to the grave, we shall not be rash in assuming that, at least, these various groups of women disciples, whom Jesus appeared to on this occasion could hardly have counted less than twelve women. Quickly the news spread among that privileged inner circle of the friends of Jesus. In Ophel, on Mount Sion, among the Galilean pilgrims camped on the slopes of Mount Olivet, in Bethania—everywhere the message was given : "The Lord is risen indeed. We have seen and spoken with Him."

Mary Magdalene had already delivered her message, and shortly after we may conclude that a group of these loyal women arrived at Mary's house—the home of John Mark. We know that "it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Mary of James, and the other women that were with them" that told these things to the Apostles. Among the "other women" unnamed, we should doubtless have found Salome and Mary of Cleophas. The former was the mother of James and John ; both were relatives of our Blessed Lady.

These ministering women told their news everywhere.

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If they had hoped to fill all hearts with joy, they were mistaken. To their hearers—excluding our Lady and St. John—“*these words seemed as an idle tale, and they did not believe them.*” The women persisted in their story; each had some detail to relate. Each corroborated the account given by her companions. There was no discrepancy, no contradiction. Mary Magdalene’s story fitted in exactly with that told by the others. All they said was received with mocking incredulity, as nonsense and “idle tales.” The overflowing joy of the witnesses was taken as proof that they were influenced by some hallucination. As these chosen messengers, sent by Jesus Himself, related all that had happened, we may conjecture that if St. Thomas was with the Eleven, he got up and walked away. If he would not yield to the testimony of his brethren, we may be sure that he was the most determined in pronouncing his incredulity and condemning the women as visionaries.

Yet the news was true, but despair and grief had so benumbed the disciples’ faculties that, for the present, they could not accept the blessed tidings—the revulsion was too great, and He who sent those messengers of hope to His sorrow-stricken brethren knew well that the testimony would be rejected. Still it did its work; it served to corroborate the evidence given by Peter and the disciples of Emmaus. From the various post-Resurrection narratives, we may gather that St. John was the only one who believed in the Resurrection of Christ, without having had some supernatural revelation given by an Angel or an apparition of Jesus Himself. Nothing short of seeing the Saviour, of having “many proofs,” could convince the others that the grave no longer held their loved Master captive.

From the reception with which the ministering women met we may learn not always to expect success, even when we are trying to do some apostolic work—to win souls to Christ, to make known His Church. Some are destined to sow the seed, others to water it, others again to gather in the harvest. No work is lost if done for God, however

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unfruitful it may appear. We must learn, therefore, to be faithful witnesses, never discouraged by failures. We work for One who reads the inmost soul, and who rewards our good intentions even when a milestone of *apparent* failure seems to mark each effort we make for God. If the pioneers appear to fail, others profit by their efforts; the former have not laboured in vain.

These loyal ministering women bravely fulfilled their mission in spite of their companions' mockery and incredulity. Jesus vindicated their honour when He manifested Himself to His brethren, and as the years passed by and the Gospels were penned, we find that each Evangelist recorded the part taken by these devoted disciples in the grand drama of that Easter morning. The sacred writers record, too, the incredulity of the brethren, their persistence in denying the possibility of the Resurrection.

These women held their ground, little dreaming that in ages to come, the narration of the incredulity of the Apostles and disciples would be one of the most striking testimonies to the reality of Christ's Resurrection. The Gospels prove that the disciples had no eager expectation of seeing their Lord alive again, no expectation which would have led them to accept the women's story instantly and joyfully. The incredulous disciples only yielded to undisputed proofs.

Such enduring results followed what appeared to be an unsuccessful effort! How encouraging for us to have such records! It should teach us that God's view of failures differs totally from the world's view. If this world were a finality, many unsuccessful ventures—even for the service of God—would be counted utter fiascoes, but looking to the ultimate goal, eternity, life is seen in its true light. When the trumpet of the Angel shall sound forth the hour of the final judgment how many successful lives—in the world's estimation—will prove to have been utter, irrevocable failures; how many toiling, stricken lives will be revealed as glorious successes!

These devoted women had the reward of their loving

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service, however, even in this world. Jesus appeared to them before manifesting Himself to the Apostles. He justified their testimony and, later, they were privileged to see Him ascend into Heaven. They had their reward in the fulness of joy they experienced in conversing with their Risen Saviour. They rejoice still and will rejoice for ever in that never-ending manifestation of Jesus to the soul of the redeemed—that manifestation which we call the Beatific Vision. Truly, God is munificent in His gifts to His faithful disciples.

We have meditated on the loving devotedness of these holy women, and admired their brave fidelity to their Divine Master. Perhaps we have envied them and wished that we could have shared their labour of love. Can we do no more? Shall we content ourselves with admiring and envying? No, we can go further, for though Jesus has ascended into Heaven, He still asks for the loving services of His servants and handmaidens. In the early Church the deaconesses looked after the sick, the dying, and the dead. Virgins and widows consecrated their lives to the service of God. In our own times, there are thousands of convents. But, in addition, the Church requires the help of the laity, of those whose vocation calls them to take care of the home, to earn their own living. Every woman can do something for God. In her own sphere she can help to spread the Gospel message. The poor are always with us, and we can minister to them "as unto the Lord."

Let us then learn from our meditation on the ministering women to take up some active service for God if it be in our power. At least we can pray for those who go forth to sow the good seed; generally speaking we can do more. Most people can find some apostolic work at hand *if they will honestly look for it*. Be it ours not to grow weary in well-doing, to devote our *talents, time, and energies* to propagating the joyful news that "the Lord is risen indeed." He lives in His Church, and He would have us make known His Presence there, as far as it lies in our power. He would have us go to His brethren—the poor, the sick, the sorrow-

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ful, the ignorant, and blessed are they whom the Risen Saviour sends on His messages of love and mercy.

When the final day of judgment comes, when He will manifest Himself to the whole world, then those who have served Christ in His members—His brethren and theirs—will hear the welcome invitation: "Come, ye blessed of My Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. . . . Amen, I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these My least brethren, you did it to Me."¹

SUMMARY FOR MEDITATION

First Prelude.—Represent to yourself the group of holy women, at the moment when their Risen Lord greets them, saying, "All hail!"

Second Prelude.—Ask for the grace to realise the blessedness of ministering to Jesus in His members—our brethren and His.

First Point.—The holy women hasten to obey the angel. Jesus meets them. They recognise Him, fall at His feet, and worship.

Second Point.—Our Lord sends them to announce the news of His Resurrection to His brethren. He promises to see them in Galilee.

Third Point.—The women hasten to deliver the message. They go to different parts of Jerusalem and the suburbs. The brethren refuse to accept their testimony.

Colloquy.—Adore your Risen Saviour in union with the holy women. Thank Him for His victory over death, for deigning to call us His brethren. Ask Him to make use of you as one of His messengers—to show you the work He would have you do. Pray that you may never be discouraged by apparent failures. Offer yourself "to spend and be spent" for the good of souls, and the propagation of the Faith.

¹ St. Matt. xxv. 24.

XII

THE APPARITION TO ST. PETER

WHEN Jesus vanished out of the sight of the two disciples of Emmaus as they reclined at table, we are told that, "rising up at the same hour they went back to Jerusalem, and found the Eleven gathered together and those that were with them."¹ Before the two pilgrims had time to tell their story of the Lord's gracious apparition to them, those who were gathered in that upper room joyfully announced to them the news of the Resurrection. All greeted them with the welcome words: "The Lord is risen indeed and hath appeared unto Simon."

Faith in our Lord's Resurrection was gradually spreading; the witness of the empty sepulchre, the testimony of Mary Magdalene and her companions, had prepared the way, although the Apostles and disciples treated the women's accounts as "idle tales." But when it was made known that Jesus "was seen by Cephas," the incredulity of the Apostles—with the exception of St. Thomas—gradually melted away. St. Peter was ever their leader, even though he had denied his Master: if he asserted Jesus to be risen, and that he himself had seen and spoken to His Lord, then it must be true. Joyfully they exclaimed: "The Lord is risen indeed and hath appeared unto Simon."

Sorely Simon Peter needed that blessed act of condescension on the part of his Divine Master. Of all the Apostles and disciples none grieved so deeply as Peter, for, in addition to his terrible sorrow for the death on the Cross endured by Jesus, whom he loved with all the strength

¹ St. Luke xxiv. 33.

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of his ardent soul, Peter had to endure the bitter reproaches of his conscience, and the humiliation of knowing that, having promised more than his fellow Apostles, he had done far less, and, by his threefold denial, had added to his Lord's sufferings.

Peter's grief and contrition is beyond description, for only he who suffers knows the bitterness of his own heart. All had passed so rapidly—the arrestation of Jesus, the Apostles' flight, and Peter's denial in the courtyard of the house of Caiphas. Satan then had realised his desire to sift Simon as wheat, and to a certain extent, the devil had succeeded. Simon Peter, overcome by fear, denied his Master with oaths and curses. Probably it was only when "the Lord, turning, looked on Peter" that the Apostle fully realised what an awful sin he had committed. Then "going forth he wept bitterly," and throughout his whole life tears ever ran down his cheeks when the thought of his denial came back to his mind.

After Simon Peter had left the high priest's house, we may be sure that he heard of the various events of the Passion as the sacred tragedy of Calvary was gradually enacted. He learned that Jesus had been tried, condemned, scourged, crucified at the ninth hour. Doubtless Peter and the rest of the Apostles were included among those male disciples—"all His acquaintance" whom, St. Luke tells us, "stood afar off beholding these things" (*i.e.* the death of Jesus upon the Cross) in company with "the women that had followed Him from Galilee."¹ It was fitting that those who were to be witnesses of Jesus, "even unto the ends of the world," should have been present at His Death.

The end came at last ; how great was Peter's despair, for he had not the faintest hope that our Lord would ever rise again. As we have conjectured, the penitent Apostle went to the blessed Mother of God, told her of his awful sin, and asked her forgiveness for the injury he had done to her Son. Slowly the hours of that great Sabbath

¹ St. Luke xxiii. 49.

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passed for Peter, who still "wept bitterly." In vain did the other Apostles, especially St. John, strive to console him and assure him of his Master's forgiveness. Peter did not doubt his Lord's loving-kindness, or clemency. He knew that loving *look* betokened a full, free pardon, but Peter could never forgive himself for having denied his Lord, and he continued to weep bitterly.

Easter Day dawned, and very early in the morning St. Mary Magdalene came to bring Peter and John the news that the tomb had been desecrated—rifled of its treasure, as she imagined. The two Apostles hurried to the garden, examined the empty tomb, and then returned home—John believing, Peter incredulous. A little later the ministering women declared that they had seen "a vision of angels," and shortly after they related their having seen the Risen Lord, and delivered His consoling message: the disciples would see Him again in Galilee. No promise of the blessed vision of the Risen Saviour was given them for that very day in Jerusalem. Peter had the consolation of receiving a special message—the Angels had named him. They had said to Mary of James and Salome, the mother of St. John: "He is risen . . . go tell His disciples *and Peter* that He goeth before you into Galilee."¹

Still Peter wept: if indeed the Master had risen how can the guilty Apostle face Him? Yet, Peter knew Jesus so well, he longed so to implore His pardon, and even as Peter wept bitterly—perhaps in the garden near the empty tomb—pouring out his humble confession and imploring pardon, lo, the Risen Saviour stood before Peter, looking tenderly upon him, and the Apostle prostrated Himself at the feet of Jesus. Once more, never to retract it, Peter made his confession: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Yes, it was He Himself:

"He, who all unseen
Had stirred the half-awakened conscience, now
Himself makes manifest. What passed between

¹ St. Mark xvi. 6.

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The penitent and his Absolver, none
May know. He who, as Man, had claimed the power
To forgive, and to His priests transmits
This office, has the seal of secrecy
Set on the penance chamber. There within
His wounded Heart He hides our sins, and sighs,
And penitential tears."

Though nothing of this touching sacred interview has been recorded, still from our knowledge of our dear Lord and His Apostle who loved Him more than all his fellows, we may be certain that Peter made the most complete confession of his fault, blaming himself only, his presumption and his imprudence in venturing among his Lord's enemies. He surely recalled, too, his folly in not having believed his Master's predictions. Yet all this could only be expressed when the fear and awe of seeing his Risen Saviour had given place to faith, confidence, and joy.

Never could Simon Peter forget the sweetness of that blessed moment of reconciliation, an absolution given by the Son of God Himself! We have had many such absolutions, all given by Him and none other, since, whenever the priest pronounces the words of absolution, it is necessary that Jesus Himself should ratify the words of His minister. We may presume Peter confessed his unworthiness to be Christ's Vicar, and that Jesus told him he would retain the office, and, being strengthened, he must confirm his brethren.

At last that precious interview came to an end. Jesus disappeared suddenly, leaving His Apostle overwhelmed with transports of joy. Surely Peter hurried to the blessed Mother of God, to St. John, and to the other Apostles to tell them that he also had seen the Lord. And Peter's words brought conviction to the Apostles and disciples—only a few still refused to believe. Thus the hours of the glorious Resurrection Day sped on their course with all their hopes and fears, and the evening brought the glorious certainty that the Lord had indeed risen, for so many had seen Him. As He had promised, their joy was full.

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Let us now consider, in the light of St. Peter's own words and of his after life, what were the effects of his fall, his reconciliation, and his confirmation in his office. If we examine St. Peter's after life we find that the crucible through which the Apostle passed had a marvellous transforming power. Satan had gratified his fiendish desire to sift Simon as wheat, with the result that the bad in Simon Peter had been winnowed and cast out. His impetuosity and presumption were bridled. He was no longer intolerant and overbearing, while he kept his firmness, courage, generosity, and self-sacrifice. It was expedient for Peter that he should be tried, and his Master did not spare him the combat, knowing that though Peter sinned yet, from that fault, good would come. Those who rule others, have need of self-knowledge, and before his denial Peter did not know himself—he over-estimated his powers of resistance and under-estimated the strength of the devil's onset. It was Satan's interest to overthrow Peter, even as he had overthrown Judas. Both fell, but the former rose because he truly loved his Lord, whereas Judas' passion was gold. Peter rose again, too, after having gained precious experience and deep humility because Jesus had prayed for him, that his faith might not fail.

On the Day of Pentecost, Peter, who had quailed before a servant maid, boldly reproached the rulers of Israel and confessed Christ's Divinity when he said to them: "Let all the house of Israel know most surely that God hath made both Lord and Christ this same Jesus whom you have crucified."¹ He and his companion, St. John, boldly answered the question put to them by Caiphias in the name and presence of the Sanhedrin. To the interrogation: "By what power or by what name have you done this?" Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said to them: "Ye princes of the people and ancients hear. . . . Be it known to you all and to all the people of Israel, that by the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified,

¹ Acts ii. 36.

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whom God raised from the dead, even by Him, this man standeth here before you whole." ¹

When the high priest forbade them to teach and heal in the Name of Jesus, Peter and the Apostles boldly answered: "We ought to obey God rather than man." Then, profiting by every occasion to announce the Resurrection, they continued: "The God of our fathers hath raised up Jesus, whom you put to death, hanging Him upon a tree. Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be Prince and Saviour, to give repentance to Israel and remission of sins, and we are witnesses of these things." ² What a transformation in St. Peter wrought by the power of God, who can perfect strength in weakness when His servants rely upon Him and distrust themselves!

If we turn to St. Peter's Epistles, we seem to find echoes of his own bitter experience—words suggested by one who had passed through deep waters and been buffeted by Satan. Note the subjoined quotations in the light of the Apostle's own fall and repentance. Referring to Christians enduring tribulations St. Peter writes: "Wherein you shall greatly rejoice . . . that the trial of your faith (much more precious than gold tried in the fire) may be found unto the praise and glory and honour at the appearing of Jesus Christ." ³ Again he writes and exhorts his readers to practise precisely those virtues which his fall had taught him: "Be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, being lovers of the brotherhood, merciful, modest, humble." ⁴ He warns his disciples, too, of the devil's activity and power: "Be sober and watch, because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour." ⁵

We have seen how St. Peter, the Prince of the Apostles, profited by his experience, painful though it was. Let us now see what we may learn from our past sins and broken protestations of fidelity. St. Peter sinned grievously, yet in a sense we may say "*felix culpa*," as the Church says of

¹ Acts iv. 8.

² Acts v. 29.

³ 1 Pet. i. 6.

⁴ *Ibid.*, iii. 8.

⁵ *Ibid.*, v. 8.

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Adam's fall. For us it is indeed a "*felix culpa*," since it teaches us such useful lessons and gives all penitents a powerful protector in Heaven.

St. Peter, after his sin, certainly did not distrust our Lord, for so often he had heard Him encourage sinners. During the three years' ministry, Peter had so often seen Jesus receive sinners and heard His touching invitations to them. In company with the other Apostles Simon Peter had heard our Lord's beautiful parables of the lost drachm, of the prodigal son, of the stray sheep. He knew, too, how Jesus had pardoned St. Mary Magdalene, how He had taken her part, how He had invited all those who were weary and heavy laden to come to Him for rest. But doubtless St. Peter's great trouble after his fall and before Jesus appeared to him, was precisely the fact that he no longer had access to his Divine Master, and since none of the Apostles expected Jesus to rise, it does not seem probable that any one of them would have addressed a prayer to Him as being invisibly present as God. Their faith in the Divinity appears to have been overclouded, though St. Peter's belief may have been somewhat stronger than that of the rest. However great was Peter's sin he did not, like Judas, add to it the sin of despair. St. Peter was not the man to distrust his loved Master.

There is a great lesson for us here ; we, too, may sin, even grievously, and in spite of our having received special graces and warnings. Still we must never distrust our Divine Lord, whom even His enemies knew as the *Friend* of publicans and sinners. We know His loving invitations, His touching parables, and that He came to save the lost. Therefore if our sins be great, if we have strayed far from the One Fold, then we are precisely those whom our Lord came to seek and to save. A firm, humble confidence in God's *Infinite* mercy, the conviction that, compared to it, our *finite* sin is but as a drop compared with the vast ocean—this faith glorifies God, whereas distrust and despondency dishonour Him.

St. Peter had the special privilege of hearing his pardon

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pronounced by Jesus Himself, and as we think of this inestimable blessing, we do well to ask ourselves this question : Are we sufficiently grateful for our numerous absolutions ? How often we have received forgiveness ! How many good confessions we have made ! Yet we are apt to forget the *price* of our absolution—nothing less than the Precious Blood shed for our salvation would suffice to remove the stain of the smallest venial sin. St. Peter saw Jesus agonising in the Garden, hanging upon the Cross, and expiring on it. Peter stood “ afar off ” when our Saviour “ bore our sins in His own Body on the tree,” and he realised later, if not then, that the wounds of his sin of denial were healed by His Master’s stripes. When we make our act of contrition, while the priest pronounces the words of absolution, let us try to grasp what sin means, by what it cost our Lord to atone for man’s transgressions.

From the after life of the Prince of the Apostles, we learn that he endeavoured to atone for his sin by greater love. Having sinned deeply, he strove to love much. From this we learn that a deeper love is the truest reparation for any fault. Jesus Himself pointed this out to St. Peter when, after having asked him for a triple confession of love, He bade him feed the sheep and lambs of the Fold. The truly penitent soul ever experiences an earnest longing to prove the sincerity of its repentance. Thanks be to God, there are ample opportunities of doing this, for all, in their own sphere, can assist in feeding the sheep and lambs of Christ, and generally speaking, the home circle should be the first field of our apostleship. Then come “ those of the household of faith ” and, lastly, all men, *i.e.* all with whom we come in contact.

Those, who have wrestled with the adversary of mankind and have suffered defeat at times, are better able to strengthen and help others, than those who have never endured strong temptations. It was after St. Peter had learned experience by his own defeat, that Jesus commissioned him to feed and strengthen his weaker brethren. Therefore, whichever way we look at St. Peter’s sin and

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his subsequent reparation, it gives us wonderful encouragement to trust in God after we have sinned against Him, since it brings into relief the wondrous loving-kindness of the Risen Shepherd, who on the very day of His Resurrection sought out His sorrowing Apostle, granting him a special apparition that He might pardon, console, and gladden him. Truly may we sing with one of God's saints :

“ The love of Jesus what it is
None but His loved ones know.”

SUMMARY FOR MEDITATION

First Prelude.—Think of St. Peter at the moment when the Risen Saviour appeared to him.

Second Prelude.—Pray for a firm confidence in the infinite kindness and mercy of the Good Shepherd.

First Point.—St. Peter's sorrow after his denial. His desolation on Good Friday and the great Sabbath. Consider how the narratives of the holy women must have stirred his soul in its inmost depths.

Second Point.—While Simon Peter was weeping, Jesus suddenly manifested Himself. He pardoned and consoled the penitent apostle, and doubtless confirmed him in his office as the Vicar of Christ. Simon Peter's joy was unbounded.

Third Point.—Peter's denial turned to his advantage. It made him more humble and modest. Peter's after life shows what a transformation was worked in him. We may learn to trust implicitly in our merciful Saviour, especially after a fault, and to show our sorrow by greater love of God and of our neighbour.

Colloquy.—Adore our blessed Lord. Thank Him for all the lessons we learn from St. Peter's fall and repentance. Pray for the gift of perfect contrition. Thank our Lord for the numerous absolutions we have received. Ask for grace to show our love of God by devoting ourselves to the lambs and sheep of His fold. Pray for sinners. Ask, through St. Peter's intercession, that you may always have perfect contrition after a sin, and especially at the hour of death. Make St. Peter's words your own : “ Lord, Thou knowest all things ; Thou knowest that I love Thee.”

XIII

THE DISCIPLES OF EMMAUS (I)

WE have seen how early on Easter Day the many holy women, the King's special messengers to His brethren, had dispersed over Jerusalem, giving the joyful news both in the city and the suburbs that Jesus was risen. Their incredulity and terror had given place to faith and joy.

Nevertheless their testimony was unanimously rejected ; they were treated as visionaries. Among those who disbelieved their words were two disciples, Cleophas and one whose name is not recorded. The early Fathers have conjectured that both belonged to the band of the seventy-two disciples, whom Jesus once sent out to evangelise. We can picture these two incredulous disciples listening to the eager women's story, shrugging their shoulders contemptuously, showing their superior judgment and common sense, as they imagined, by treating the women's testimony as utter nonsense—idle tales. Let these Galilean women believe in Jesus' Resurrection ! It was characteristic of their sex to be easily duped. Had the report come from the Apostles, it might have been credible. But since weak, excitable women spread the report, Cleophas and his companion did not believe.

The various bands of holy women agreed in their testimony as to the central fact of the Resurrection, though each little group of women had certain individual experiences to relate, and the Apostles and disciples, in their various retreats, heard the testimony now of one band, now of the other. We may presume that the Apostles and their companions in the Cenacle were the first to hear the women's

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narratives, since we know that Mary Magdalene told St. Peter and St. John that the sepulchre was empty, and that when she had seen Jesus in the Garden, she ran and "told these things to the Apostles." The two disciples of Emmaus had evidently conversed with Peter and John, after the latter had visited the empty tomb, therefore we may conclude that Cleophas and his unnamed companion were with the Apostles in the Cenacle when the ministering women announced the joyful news to Jesus' "brethren."

Despondent as these two disciples were, we can conceive how such joyful tidings—too good to be true—must have struck a jarring chord.

All hope had gone out of their lives, when they lost their loved Master; why would these women mock their grief by such "idle tales"? Why did they persist in striving to delude them with false hopes? No, one bitter disillusionment was sufficient; so, incredulous and sad at heart, Cleophas and his friend determined to leave Jerusalem. Moreover, they would be safer in Emmaus, for surely the idle tales these excited women were spreading must inevitably reach the ears of the rulers and expose the brethren to great danger. So as the great drama of Calvary was over, and there was nothing else to do but to take up the strands of their former lives—the daily work which occupied them before they knew Jesus—these two disciples, leaving their sorrowful companions in the Cenacle "with the doors closed for fear of the Jews," set off for Emmaus.

The narrative of the apparition of Jesus to Cleophas and his companion is peculiar to St. Luke's Gospel. He relates it in a charmingly picturesque and vivid style. We seem to see the two pilgrims, to hear their words, to catch the very expression of their features. As a writer has admirably said, this exquisite narration "must be looked upon as among 'the gleanings of the grapes' which rewarded St. Luke's researches even after the full vintage had apparently been gathered in by others."

We will follow the sacred narrative line by line: "And

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behold two of them went the same day to a town which was sixty furlongs from Jerusalem, named Emmaus." Cleophas was one of the two; except in this instance we have no mention of this disciple. "Cleophas" is probably a diminutive of Cleopatrus, which is a Greek name. Clophas (or Alpheus) is a Hebrew name, so we cannot identify this Cleophas with Clophas, the father of James the Less. Early Christian writers have suggested that Nathaniel was the second disciple, and some have supposed the unnamed disciple to have been St. Luke himself. Certainly the narration bears the imprint of an eyewitness, who *may* have been the Evangelist himself, but it is more probably that St. Luke obtained this narration from one of the two who took part in it, since he does not include himself among those "who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word."¹

It must suffice for us to know that Cleophas and his companion were disciples of our dear Lord. It was Easter Day—that blessed first day of the week—and judging from the fact that they reached Emmaus and returned almost immediately to Jerusalem, arriving there before the gates were closed at sunset—*i.e.* somewhere about six at the Paschal season—we may presume that they started on their journey about one o'clock, after their mid-day meal. Emmaus was a village or hamlet some sixty furlongs, *i.e.* about eight or nine English miles from Jerusalem.²

¹ St. Luke i. 2.

² The name "Emmaus" is connected with the Arabic word Hammám (a bath), and this possibly refers to some warm medicinal springs which were found there. In the time of the Crusaders, the village of Kubeibeh was known as the traditional Emmaus. It lies some eight miles north-west of Jerusalem and possesses some springs. The ruins of an ancient church prove that it was regarded as a sacred site connected with some Gospel narrative. Moreover it is just sixty furlongs from Jerusalem. Hence there are sufficient data to justify us in accepting the modern village of Kubeibeh as the Emmaus of the Gospel. The site is now in the charge of the Franciscans, who claim the authority of the Crusaders for the authenticity of the site, by whom probably the church was built. After long and careful sifting of this vexed question, the Palestine

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That the devout reader may the better contemplate this beautiful and instructive narration, we will endeavour to describe the road from Jerusalem to Emmaus. This description is based upon the ancient topography of Jerusalem and its suburbs, and on the supposition that the two disciples set out from the Cenacle on Mount Sion.

The road from the southern slopes of Sion to Emmaus led due north along raised footpaths and under low archways, past the palaces of Annas and Caiphas. Skirting the royal palace of Herod the Great, our pilgrims turned westward when they reached the north-eastern angle of the palace, and went out of Jerusalem by the Jaffa Gate, close by the Tower of Hippicus. What did they see before them as they passed through the ancient gateway and stood upon the plateau which extended northwards and westwards beyond the city walls? On their right, lay the Pool of Ezechias shimmering in the sunlight, reflecting the graceful palms and willows planted around it, as well as the blue cloudless sky. More than seven hundred years had passed since King Ezechias had built that vast reservoir "and a conduit and brought waters into the city."¹ Farther back and beyond the Pool, rose the Hill of Calvary with all its awful memories, while to the north-west, the massive octagonal Tower of Psephinus stood sheer against the sky.

On their left, the plateau sloped down to the Valley of Gihon, which had its head some three miles to the west. The Brook Gihon, running from the Upper Pool, parallel with the edge of the plateau, turned sharply southward at the Jaffa Gate. Sparkling and bubbling, the silvery stream passed through the Lower Valley and Lower Pool of Gihon, then skirting the deep Ravine of Ennom (A.V. Hinnom) and along the southern boundary, it joined the Brook Cedron at the Fountain of El-Rogel. From the

Exploration Society has also accepted Kubeibeh as the true site of Emmaus. This honour has been claimed for three other hamlets, notably Kolonieh, but in a devotional work, such controversial questions are out of place.

¹ 4 Kings xx. 20.

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Jaffa Gate, the road led direct to Bethlehem, the city of David, some six miles distant, which could be seen from the Sion Plateau.

Stretching out westward from Jaffa Gate lay the Roman road to the seaport of Jaffa. It was well kept, and sufficiently wide to allow of three travellers walking abreast. Our two pilgrims followed this road for about four miles. The first two miles led them through pleasant meadows, and barley-fields already ripe for the sickle. Here and there commodious houses stood in well-cultivated gardens. These were the country seats of the wealthy inhabitants of the Upper City of Sion. Low stone walls, overgrown with brambles or cactus hedges, marked off the boundary of each property.

It was the month of Nisan, which corresponds approximately to our April; the spring rains were past, and the fruit trees were in full blossom. Cleophas and his friend walked past vineyards, olive groves, and clumps of tamarisks. Tall palm trees gave them acceptable shelter from the hot, dazzling sun. Vines, pomegranates, and fig-trees filled the air with the perfume of their flowers, while all along the Upper Valley, on their left, rippled and plashed the Brook Gihon, overflowing its banks after the spring rains.

About two miles from the Jaffa Gate, our travellers reached the edge of the plain. There the scene changed as by enchantment, and the route led through a barren, rocky district. Large boulders lay scattered on either side of the road. As this district was waterless, the scanty vegetation consisted of tall thistles, brambles, nettles, and thorn clumps. Ravens croaked overhead or perched solemnly on the boulders. Vultures and eagles had their nests in the rocky caverns. After about an hour's walk through this waste Cleophas and his companion left the highway for a mule path which led direct to Emmaus through a beautiful fertile valley. The grass was gemmed with wild flowers—those "lilies of the field" which Jesus loved so well—anemones, tulips, ranunculus, ox-eyed daisies,

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and blue campanulas gave a dazzling wealth of colour to the sunlit landscape. In this earthly Paradise the doves cooed, sparrows twittered, and insects hummed merrily. Presently the road led up the flank of a mountain, and there, nestled close to the summit—some 2500 feet above the Mediterranean—stood the hamlet of Emmaus, “sixty furlongs from Jerusalem.”

On that bright Spring afternoon, all Nature seemed to proclaim the Resurrection, but little the two sorrowful disciples troubled about their surroundings. Grief has a stupefying effect on men’s minds; probably the very brightness of that exquisite scenery jarred upon them. Their souls had been more attuned to the darkness of Calvary, for their hearts were crushed with grief; there was nothing to live for now that Jesus was dead—at least, so they imagined. Blind and deaf to all around, they set out on their journey, and the one subject of their conversation and thoughts was Jesus crucified.

The moment they left the Cenacle they began to speak about their loved Master. “They talked together of all these things which had happened.” How much there was to ponder over and discuss! No wonder that “they talked and reasoned with themselves.” So much had happened within the last three days that the Triumphal Entry of Jesus, which had taken place just one week before, seemed far, far back in the past. That very Easter Day had been so eventful. Therefore as our pilgrims—like true Orientals walking during the heat of the day—went slowly along, their gait, gestures, and set features bespoke men whose minds were perplexed and whose souls were overwhelmed with some great sorrow.

They discussed the incidents of the day, asking why their Master had allowed Himself to be taken captive. Could He not have foreseen and prevented His arrestation? Could He not have escaped from their hands? How could He have been the Messiah, since the rulers taught that He who should redeem Israel could not die? Then, too, the sepulchre was empty. Who could have removed Jesus’

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Body and for what purpose? Was this the work of friends or foes? True, the women had related strange stories, but the Apostles did not believe their tales, and if the Master had indeed risen, surely He would have appeared to the Eleven, not to a few women. Thus, we may presume, these two faithful friends of Jesus discussed the strange, inexplicable tangle of events. As we contemplate Cleophas and his companion walking and conversing concerning Jesus, the words of the prophet recur to our minds: "Then they that feared the Lord spoke every one with his neighbour, and the Lord gave ear, and heard it: and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that fear the Lord and think often on His Name. And they shall be my special possession, saith the Lord of Hosts."¹

The Lord Jesus "gave ear and heard" every word uttered by these grief-stricken disciples. They were His "special possession," purchased with His Precious Blood. Like straying sheep, they were wandering from the Fold, so the Good Shepherd hastened to save them and to fulfil His blessed promise: "Where there are two or three gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them."² Thus "it came to pass that while they talked and reasoned with themselves Jesus Himself, also drawing near, went with them."

Thus it ever is; the moment we *think* and *speak* of our Lord, the moment we *wish* for Him, He draws near in response to the inward deep longing which He has Himself implanted in the soul. He comes incognito—yet, though *unrevealed* and *unrecognised*, He is beside us in answer to our tacit prayer.

Where did He join them? On Mount Sion, without the city gates, in the secluded valley? We know not; we simply know that He "drew near." Whence did He come? Once more, we know not, but this we are told, that whereas the two pilgrims were by themselves eagerly arguing one moment, the next instant Jesus joined them, and apparently He overtook them. Perhaps even before

¹ Mal. iii. 16.

² St. Matt. xviii. 20.

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He spoke to them He had walked behind them for a few moments. In any case His Risen Body was no longer fettered by the laws which govern material objects. Like a flash of lightning He could transport Himself from one place to another. So "it came to pass," not fortuitously but in the hour of their greatest need, in the moment the most propitious, Jesus stood beside them.

Yet, because "He appeared in another shape," these two sorrowing disciples failed to recognise their loved Master. There was also a supernatural reason for their not knowing Him, since "their eyes were held that they should not know Him." It was not His will to reveal Himself to their eyes at once, as He had done when He appeared to the holy women. They went to the grave seeking His dead Body that they might anoint It, and He showed Himself to them alive. They recognised His voice and features instantly. Mary Magdalene, too, knew Him by His voice before she saw Him to be her Lord. In both these manifestations the revelation, accompanied by an interior illumination, was made to the senses.

The disciples of Emmaus were perplexed by *intellectual difficulties*, therefore Jesus revealed Himself first to their intellect, solved the problems which they found so inexplicable, and only when He had convinced them of the necessity of the Passion, and removed their false conceptions concerning the Messiah and His Divine work, did He make known His identity. Thus Jesus dealt with each according to his needs, for He knows each of His own, not only by name, but also He sounds those depths of the human soul which no human creature can ever really fathom.

Having come up with the two disciples Jesus was the first to speak, and He said to them: "What are these discourses that you hold one with another as you walk and are sad?" Doubtless our Lord took the form of a man in travelling attire like the two disciples, and from their reply, we may conclude that the interruption was unwelcome. Jesus here came to His own but, because their eyes were held, they received Him not as their Lord

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and Master. It was perfectly natural that when Cleophas and his companion had such a favourable opportunity of discussing their difficulties, as they went along a quiet country road, that they should not desire the presence of a third person. Yet the words of Jesus riveted their attention instantly, for His question proved that He knew them to be perplexed and sorrowful. They felt that He sympathised with them, and at once treated Him as a friend.

“ And one of them, whose name was Cleophas, answering said : Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem (literally, Art Thou a lonely stranger ?), and hast not known the things that have been done there in these days ? ” Then Jesus, that He might give them the opportunity of pouring out their grief, asked for further particulars. He said to them : “ What things ? ” He knew well what troubled them, yet He invited them to speak freely that He might enlighten their ignorance, remove their erroneous preconceptions concerning the Messias, and impart to them the gift of faith.

Thus encouraged, the two pilgrims related their sorrow and perplexities. Doubtless now one spoke, now the other, as Jesus walked between them on the road to Emmaus. They said : “ Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet, mighty in work and word before God and all the people. And how our chief priests and princes delivered Him to be condemned to death and crucified Him. But we hoped that it was He that should have redeemed Israel, and now, besides all this, to-day is the third day since these things were done. Yea, and certain women also of our company affrighted us, who before it was light were at the sepulchre. And not finding His Body came saying that they had also seen a vision of Angels, who say that He is alive. And some of our people went to the sepulchre and found it so, as the women had said, but Him they found not.”

With infinite love and compassion Jesus listened to the disciples' sorrowful story, which revealed their disappointed hopes, their incredulity, and their loyalty to

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Him, although He had not realised their expectations. They praised their dead Master, and spoke of Him as a Prophet great before God and man. They related the tragedy of His death, and lay bare the fact that all their hopes in Him as the Messiah were extinguished, buried with Him in that garden tomb. Finally, they referred to what they supposed to be the women's idle tales and treated them as mere nonsense. How pathetically they related the story of the Passion to Him who endured it! How simply they lay bare the wounds of their soul! It was a relief for them to tell this Stranger their sorrow, for they felt that He sympathised with them. Patiently He listened to their story that He might the more effectually instruct them unto salvation, rectify their errors, reveal Himself to them, and turn their sorrow into joy.

How many thousands of times in the course of ages has Jesus, our Redeemer, heard a like confession of incredulity which betrayed ignorance of the truth that "to them that love God all things work together unto good, to such as, according to His purpose, are called to be saints!"¹ Perhaps we ourselves have knelt before the Tabernacle and poured out the story of our bitter disappointments. We have told Him how difficult it was for us to realise that certain crosses, bereavements, and failures came by His permissive will. We have confessed our failure to reconcile life's riddles, our discouragements and incredulity. We have asked Him how it was that works of zeal, undertaken for His Glory, were thwarted by the malice of men and even by the opposition of good people. Then, perhaps, there has come a moment of deep peace—the prelude to the message from our Emmanuel—and He has enabled us to realise that the inspired words of Isaias have a meaning for us: "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor your ways My ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are exalted above the earth, so are My ways exalted above your ways, and my thoughts above your thoughts."² In His light we see light, and learn that our conceptions of

¹ Rom. viii. 28.

² Isa. lv. 8.

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what is for His Glory or our salvation are completely wrong, that it is for Him to say: "This is the way, walk ye in it." Then we grasp the blessed truth that

"All is right which seems most wrong
If it be His sweet will."

All true disciples of Jesus have their hours of despondency and disillusionment. They have to lament their *lost ideals*—shall we not rather say their *broken idols* in some cases? They lose one to whom they cling, to whom their soul was united as "the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David,"¹ and do not perceive that the separation is to be the means of uniting them to Him, who is their truest Friend and Brother, as well as their Redeemer. They see a cause fail to which they have devoted the best years and labours of their lives and give way to discouragement, because they do not realise that failures are often more profitable than successes. Looked at from the purely human side—as the two disciples of Emmaus considered it—the life and mission of Jesus Himself was a total failure, and yet they were to learn that never had a greater victory been won over the united might of the devil, the world, and the flesh. We must have our Emmaus walks, our hours of darkness, perplexity, and sorrow, but for our consolation we know that Jesus, the Divine Companion of our exile, is ever beside us. Granted, He comes "in another shape," and as our eyes, too, are often holden, we do not always perceive Him by our side. Yet He is there, for He has said: "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee," and there are blessed hours of interior illumination when in the silence of a retreat, of a visit to the Blessed Sacrament, or "in the breaking of bread," He makes Himself known.

"Jesus Himself drawing near went with them." He draws near to all His faithful disciples, He ever goes with them, though at times He seems so far off. One day He will draw near for the last time. He will come to take us

¹ 1 Kings xviii. 1.

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unto Himself, to open our eyes that we may gaze upon His glorified Humanity. Whatever be the human agent our Lord uses, the voice of Jesus will one day make itself heard distinctly, and the message will be: "Surely I come quickly," and thrice blessed are they who can reply from their inmost soul: "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus."

SUMMARY FOR MEDITATION

First Prelude.—Contemplate the two disciples as they leave the Cenacle and set off on the road to Emmaus.

Second Prelude.—Pray for the grace of firm faith and spiritual insight to do His will, that you may know His doctrine.¹

First Point.—Contemplate the two disciples as, after hearing the narration of the holy women, they set out on their journey. Note their perplexed, discouraged expression, their earnest words and gestures. Consider the road which they took.

Second Point.—Jesus approaches and questions them. They take Him for one of the pilgrims who has come up for the Pasch. They relate the cause of their grief—His Passion and Death. Jesus listens sympathetically.

Third Point.—We must necessarily have our dark hours, our deceptions, bereavements, and trials. Jesus, the Divine Companion of our exile, will ever be near us, though "in another shape."

Colloquy.—Thank our Lord for the beautiful lesson He gives us in this Gospel incident. Pray for the gift of firm faith in dark hours. Ask that you may ever have a living faith in His Presence. Tell our Lord your present trials and difficulties. Pray for those whose trials are the result of intellectual difficulties. Ask that you may be ready when He comes to take you unto Himself for all eternity.

¹ See St. John vii. 17.

XIV

THE DISCIPLES OF EMMAUS (II)

WE have seen in the preceding chapter how Jesus, the Pilgrim Stranger, addressed His two sorrowing disciples as they went on the road to Emmaus,

“ Absorbed in converse grave, and heeding not
The beauty of the scene, with which their thoughts
Seemed out of harmony.”

He did not reveal Himself, and, as we have learned, there were natural and supernatural reasons why they did not recognise Him. Having shown His sympathy by asking the subject of their earnest conversation, and of their sorrow, Jesus then proceeded to enlighten their minds by showing them that the very events which had so staggered their faith and shattered their hopes, were precisely those which should have strengthened both faith and hope, had they been able to interpret aright. As He had often done in days gone by, when travelling with His disciples through the highways and byways of Galilee announcing the Gospel of peace, Jesus proceeded to teach His erring disciples, and He commenced by showing them that the cause of their grief and perplexity lay in themselves.

He said to them : “ O foolish and slow of heart to believe in all things which the prophets have spoken. Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and so to enter in to His glory ? ” How tenderly Jesus rebuked them, those foolish ones (ὧ ἀνόητοι), whose eyes were holden as regards the prophecies. Yet these “ foolish ones ” were loyal, loving disciples, though incredulous. They were “ slow of heart ” to believe the words of the holy women.

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Even St. John's assurance that he believed carried no weight, because their minds were clouded. Their spiritual eyes were held as well as their bodily organs of vision. Men are proverbially "slow of heart" to believe "those truths which are repugnant to their ideas and desires." These "foolish ones" were ready to accept *some* of the predictions concerning the Redeemer of Israel—those which foretold His glorious reign—but they could not accept *all* those things spoken by the prophets, more especially the prophecies of the Messias' sufferings. God asks for an inclusive faith; man is not free to select certain truths and reject others, since all the doctrines proposed to our belief rest upon the same foundation—the veracity of God—and he who rejects deliberately one single article of faith practically rejects all, since he questions God's veracity.

Having laid down the law of the necessity of suffering on the part of the Redeemer, Jesus then proceeded to explain the prophetic types and symbols. "Beginning at Moses and all the prophets He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things that were concerning Him."

It was ever thus that Jesus had taught His Apostles and disciples. After healing the paralytic near the pond called Probatca, Jesus, speaking to the Jews and proclaiming His Divine mission, referred His hearers to the Scriptures, saying: "The same are they which give testimony of Me."¹ When He expounded the sixty-first chapter of Isaias in the synagogue of Nazareth He said: "This day is fulfilled this Scripture in your ears."² To the Jews who sought to stone Him our Lord said: "The Scriptures cannot be broken."³ Again, on the Monday in Holy Week when, disputing with the Jews in the Temple Cloisters, Jesus asked His hearers: "Have you never read in the Scriptures: The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner?"⁴ In the garden of Gethsemani Jesus' *last words*, before He was arrested,

¹ St. John v. 59.

³ St. John x. 35.

² St. Luke iv. 21.

⁴ St. Matt. xxi. 42.

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both to His *disciples* and His *enemies*, referred to the fulfilment of the prophecies. To Peter, who had cut off the ear of the high priest's servant, He said: "Put up again thy sword into its place. . . . Thinkest thou that I cannot ask My Father and He will give Me presently more than twelve legions of Angels? How, then, shall the Scriptures be fulfilled that so it must be done?"¹ And when giving Himself up to the Roman cohort, He reminded them that He had taught daily in the Temple, and they had not laid hands upon Him, but, if He then permitted them to so do, it was "that the Scriptures might be fulfilled."²

Reverently the two disciples listened as Jesus, "beginning at Moses," showed them how the Scriptures bore witness to the Messiah—to Himself. Doubtless He spoke of the promise made to Eve in "the Paradise of pleasure," of that given to Abraham: "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed."³ Jesus showed His listeners that He was "the prophet" like unto Moses; the Good Shepherd, "the Man of Sorrows" spoken of by Isaias; the "just Branch" and "the wise king" promised to Jeremias. He taught them that "the Paschal Lamb," the brazen serpent, and the scapegoat were types of Himself.

But when He came to the explanation of their greatest difficulty—His sacred Passion—what vivid pictures and burning words Jesus found in the Sacred Scriptures—prophecies inspired by the Holy Ghost, "who spake by the prophets." From the written word of God, so familiar to these pilgrims as to all devout Jews, our Lord could quote passages referring to every detail of His Passion. There they had read that "the kings of the earth stood up and the princes met together against the Lord and against His Christ."⁴ "Behold, thy King will come to thee, the Just and Saviour; He is poor and riding upon an ass and upon a colt, the foal of the ass."⁵ "They weighed for My wages thirty pieces of silver. And the Lord said to me:

¹ St. Matt. xxvi. 52.

² Cf. St. Mark xiv. 49.

³ Gen. xxii. 18.

⁴ Ps. ii. 2.

⁵ Zach. ix. 9.

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Cast it to the statuary (*i.e.* treasury), a handsome price that I was prized at by them.”¹

As Jesus brought these and many other passages to their remembrance, what memories crowded in upon them—the betrayal, arrestation, and condemnation of their beloved Master. How plain it all seemed when He opened their intelligence to understand that they themselves had been the eye-witnesses of the fulfilment of these prophecies. All had been predicted, and these disciples wondered how it was that they had not understood it all before. The awful tragedy of Good Friday had been so vividly portrayed. Had not the sacred writers foreseen the desertion of Jesus by His Apostles when, the Good Shepherd having been struck, the sheep were scattered? The silence of the Lamb of God, the insults heaped upon Him as He hung upon the Cross, His Death in the fulness of His Manhood, the shortening the days of His time, and the Crucifixion, when men dug His blessed hands and feet, numbered His bones, looked and stared upon Him,² all these incidents had been predicted. Cleophas and his fellow disciple knew that their Lord had been crucified between two thieves, that Nature had been convulsed when He died. Perhaps they saw the lots cast upon His vesture, and stood by when the soldiers broke the legs of the two malefactors, but seeing that “Jesus was already dead they did not break His legs.”³ They knew that His side was pierced and that He was laid to rest in the grave of Joseph, a rich man.

All these details had been foreseen, and, moreover, the Resurrection was foretold. The Old Testament writers had spoken plainly of it. They had looked forward to that glad Easter Day and rejoiced in spirit. How plainly this truth was set forth by David: “Thou wilt not leave My soul in hell, nor wilt Thou give Thy Holy One to see corruption.”⁴ These words could not refer to David, whose ashes the Jews revered, but to the Prince of the house of David—to David’s Lord. Osee had foretold that the

¹ Zach. xi. 12. ² Ps. xxi. 17. ³ St. John xix. 33 ⁴ Ps. xv. 9.

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Messias would rise triumphant from the grave: "He will revive us after two days, on the third day He will raise us up, and we shall live in His sight."¹ Then we may presume that Jesus reminded them of how frequently and explicitly He had foretold that He would rise on the third day, and how, early that morning, the holy women had announced that the Sepulchre was empty, and that they had seen their Risen Saviour.

With all due reverence, we may presume that Jesus brought these thoughts and truths before the two disciples, and even as they walked, listening intently to each word that fell from the lips of their Divine Teacher, their hearts burnt within them; faith and hope revived, and the intricate problems, which had perplexed them, were solved. Their intellect was convinced, and without having recognised their Teacher, they accepted the fact of the Resurrection, realising that it behoved Christ to suffer and thus to enter into His Glory.

By this time, and all too quickly for the two disciples, they reached the village of Emmaus. Cleophas and his friend halted before the door of their modest dwelling, but their Divine Companion "made as though He would go farther." "Jesus desires to be desired"; if He offers and presses His friendship upon men, He never *forces* them to accept it. He respects their free will. Often He acted thus in order to provoke His disciples to constrain Him to remain with or come to them. For example, before stilling the tempest on the Sea of Galilee, we read: "Jesus cometh to them walking upon the sea, and He would have passed by them," but hearing their cry of distress "*immediately* He spoke with them, . . . and He went up to them into the ship."² In like manner He feigned not to pay attention to the prayer of the Syrophenician and to the supplication of Bartimeus. In these two narrations Jesus appears to have "made as though He would go farther," and yet each time He only waited for their earnest entreaty, inspiring the request He so yearned to grant.

¹ Osee vi. 3.

² St. Mark vii. 48.

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Thus God often deals with men. He conceals Himself that they may entreat Him to manifest Himself, to abide with them. He excites their desires, and when with loving insistence, the soul exclaims: "I will not let Thee go except Thou bless me," when it wrestles with God in prayer, then the Creator yields to the creature who becomes "strong against God."¹ We seem to see the touching scene passing before our eyes. The two disciples pressing the Divine Pilgrim to enter and partake of their hospitality, when they constrained Him, saying: "Stay with us, because it is towards evening and the day is now far spent." The first evening commenced at three o'clock, the sun had not yet begun to sink below the horizon. How pleadingly they begged their Teacher, as yet unrecognised, to stay with them, and He, who never turns a deaf ear to His children's prayers, yielded to their importunities; "He went in with them." He had been their Companion, their Teacher; they asked Him to be their Guest and He consented.

The three enter the guest-chamber, and the disciples, giving their Friend the place of honour, ask Him to preside at their table, and so "it came to pass, whilst He was at table with them, He took bread and blessed and brake and gave to them." The supreme moment had come for Jesus to reveal Himself to these disciples. No longer "foolish and slow of heart to believe," they had accepted His teaching and He had enlightened them intellectually and spiritually. "Their eyes were opened and they knew Him, and He vanished out of their sight."

What torrents of joy inundated their souls in that moment of ecstasy! It was He Himself; He had deigned to journey with them rebuking, questioning, and instructing them. Then, the very moment they recognised Him, He had vanished. Cleophas and his companion had to learn the lesson given to Mary Magdalene. Jesus did not say to them, "Touch Me not," but He disappeared. They had to learn that certain old relations between them and

¹ Gen. xxxii. 28.

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their Master were not to be renewed. Hitherto they had known Him by personal intercourse, but after the Resurrection He had to "go farther"—to ascend to Heaven—and the disciples had to converse with Him by the prayer of faith, by partaking of the Eucharistic Banquet, in which He conceals Himself under the appearances of bread and wine. They had ministered to His bodily needs, but after He rose and ascended into Heaven, they learned to tend their poorer brethren for His sake, to serve Him in them.

Did Jesus celebrate the Holy Eucharist on this occasion? St. Chrysostom, St. Augustine, St. Jerome, St. Bede, and other Fathers of the Church reply in the affirmative. The expression "the breaking of bread" was used in apostolic times to designate the celebrations of the Mass, and the supernatural effects produced—for we are told that at the moment when Jesus gave them the bread "their eyes were opened"—seem to justify this view.

"They knew Him." Did they see the stigmata? Did they recognise His voice or His features? We know not, and it matters not. In a moment, as it were, scales fell from their eyes. They knew Him, and from their souls rose the incense of adoration. Joy filled their hearts. They had seen Him, He had spoken with them and made all so clear to them. He was the true Messiah, and they were privileged to be His followers. The Prophet of Galilee had not deceived them: He had risen on the third day as He had promised.

There was a moment of ineffable happiness, of speechless joy, and, though He had vanished so suddenly without visibly retreating, without a movement, though they gazed with amazement at the empty chair which He had occupied, yet their joy abounded for, true to His promise, He had seen them again and manifested Himself to them. Enlightened by His teaching, they were able to enter into the joy of their Lord. He had "gone farther," having done His work in their souls. If He had "vanished out

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of their sight" and home, He was still interiorly their Guest.

Presently they found words; "They said one to the other: Was not our heart burning within us whilst He spoke in the way and opened to us the Scriptures?" How they wished that they had recognised Him earlier! But He had not so willed it, and now, what remained to be done? The Evangelist tells us: "Rising up the same hour, they went back to Jerusalem." If they had gazed upon His sacred form and features, heard His voice, and been instructed by Him, there were sorrowing, despairing brethren in Jerusalem who knew not the glad tidings. So, rising from the almost untasted meal, they hastened back. Joy gave speed to their weary feet, and, though not personally commissioned to tell His brethren as Mary Magdalene had been, yet, spurred on by fraternal charity, they hastened back to Jerusalem. Little they heeded the bright landscapes through which they passed. If the hills and valleys were radiant with the glowing beams of the setting sun, their souls were filled with a brighter glory, for they had gazed upon the Sun of Righteousness—their Risen Saviour. Now with firm faith they could say: "We have found Him whom Moses in the Law, and the prophets did write, Jesus, the son of Joseph of Nazareth,"¹ and they now knew Him to be the Son of God.

It had certainly not been their original intention to return to Jerusalem that evening, but circumstances had changed. They had left the Holy City hopeless, sad, and fearing for their own safety; they returned overwhelmed with joy, longing to impart the blessed news to their desolate, incredulous brethren. It mattered not that the sun was sinking over the golden waters of the Mediterranean, that dangers awaited them in Jerusalem, that the brethren might reject their words as "idle tales." On they went, for the soul that burns with the love of God is prepared to face fatigue, danger, and even death. It is ever true that a new hope, a firm faith, a noble purpose, and strong love

¹ St. John i. 45.

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can uphold a wearied body along the rugged path of duty and overcome all the obstacles that lie on the road. Thus the saints, ignoring the weakness of their earthly frame, achieved superhuman deeds of heroism; thus shall we be enabled "to do and dare" for our God.

Earnestly conversing, their countenances transformed as they walked and were glad, Cleophas and his companion retraced their steps through the valley, over the barren district across the plateau up to the Jaffa Gate. Then, hurrying over the slopes of Sion, they reached the Cenacle, where "they found the Eleven gathered together, and those that were with them." But the scene had changed, there was excitement and great animation, and the moment the two disciples entered the room they were greeted by the cry: "The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared unto Simon." Contemplate the scene; there were gathered the glorious company of the Apostles—the future noble army of martyrs—men who were destined to carry the glad tidings of the Gospel of peace to the ends of the earth. There, too, were other disciples deeply attached to their Divine Master. Some full of hope and joy, striving to convince their incredulous brethren that Jesus had really risen and, in order to give greater weight to their assertion, appealing to the testimony of Peter: their Master had risen—not only the women declared they had seen Him, but Peter, their leader, had spoken with Him. While this animated conversation was being carried on these two pilgrims, having imperatively asked for admittance, flung open the door and, radiant with joy, they added their testimony to the Resurrection. As the brethren instantly crowded round them, repeating on all sides: "The Lord is risen indeed and hath appeared unto Simon," Cleophas and the other disciple "told what things were done in the way, and how they knew Him in the breaking of bread."

What a tense silence reigned in that room among those loyal brethren while Cleophas related all that had happened—when and where the Unknown Pilgrim had joined them,

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what He looked like, all He had said, how marvellously He had spoken—so eloquently and convincingly that they ought to have recognised Him as their Divine Master! But no, they were too “foolish and slow of heart” to perceive that Jesus Himself was speaking with them, kindling the flame of faith and hope in their souls. Then they told how He had feigned to pass on farther and that, at last, yielding to their pleading, He had entered and seated Himself at table. Still they knew Him not: only when He took bread, blessed, brake, and gave it to them, were their eyes opened, and then, just when they would have fallen at His feet to worship Him, like a flash of lightning He had vanished. The empty chair, the plate and food set before Him remained, but their guest had disappeared. But it was He and no other: of this they were certain, for their hearts had burned within them while He was expounding the Scriptures to them. Never had they understood before the true significance of the prophecies. . . .

Thus they related their blessed experience, and now and then one or other of their brethren asked a question, and these two disciples contributed their part to the testimony of the Resurrection—testimony which, like a flood-tide, had been steadily rising from the dawn of day. Note the continued witnesses, each succeeding proof more convincing than what had preceded—the empty tomb, the discarded grave-cloths, the soldiers’ flight, the angelic apparitions, the manifestations to Mary Magdalene, to the other holy women, to Peter, and then to the disciples on their road to Emmaus. Thus all present were prepared for that solemn manifestation of the Risen Saviour to the Apostles and disciples collectively. But a short moment and “God will give salvation in Sion and His Glory in Israel.” The vision of the Risen Saviour “shall appear at the end . . . it shall surely come and shall not be slack.”¹

We have accompanied the disciples of Emmaus in the spirit on their journey to and from that hamlet, let us now

¹ Hab. ii. 3.

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endeavour to learn from this touching incident—"this gleaning of the grapes after the full vintage"—some useful and consoling lessons. Perhaps we have envied these blessed followers of Jesus and wished that we had been present when Jesus "went with them" and, yielding to their entreaties, "went in with them." But, after all, have we not also had our Emmaus walks with Jesus? How often He has been with us—perchance unrevealed and unrecognised—yet really present!

We have knelt before the Tabernacle in prayer, and He has made our hearts glow within us. We have approached the Altar of God and the Divine Victim has revealed Himself "in the breaking of bread." Consoling thoughts, spiritual enlightenment, and loving rebukes have come to our inner consciousness during our meditations and retreats, and we knew that it was the Lord Himself who sent these precious graces. Every good thought and holy desire has been a proof of His Presence within us. Sometimes He has come laden with His cross and asked us to help Him to carry it, to do our part for the salvation of our brethren, to endure our passion for the sanctification of our own souls and theirs. Of all faithful disciples of Jesus who toil along life's highway, it can truly be said that He draws near and goes with them. Let us therefore take courage and exclaim with the Royal Psalmist: "He hath *led me* on the paths of justice for His own Name's sake. For though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death, I will fear no evils; for *Thou art with me*, Thy rod and Thy staff, they have comforted me."¹

Yes, our Risen Saviour goes with us, but nevertheless He wills that we should *constrain* Him to remain. If He longs to be our Guest, He desires to be pressing invited. He blesses in an especial manner those who, like Daniel, are men of desires. Therefore He inspires us to petition Him, saying: "Stay with us, O Lord, because it is towards evening and the day is now far spent." It will avail little that we have enjoyed the inestimable privilege of His

¹ Ps. xxii. 3.

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company and friendship if, like Judas, into whom "Satan entered," He leave us before we reach the goal of salvation. We all have need to pray for final perseverance—for this is a grace which none can merit—to plead with Him, "Stay with us, Lord." In spite of our foolishness—and we are all "foolish ones" in His sight—and slowness of heart, nay, precisely because of these infirmities, we need His constant presence. We need the companionship of Christ, because the devil, the world, and the flesh are so powerful, because we cannot enter the harbour without our Pilot.

We need Him, too, because "it is towards evening." In youth we cannot sow the good seed of virtues without His help. Nor will the seed mature, except He preserve it from the birds of the air and water it by His grace. We need our Risen Saviour when the sun sinks towards the west and "the night cometh when no man can work." For the young, night may come unexpectedly, for the aged it is ever close at hand, and, in the Valley of the Shadow, we cannot walk without the guiding hand of our Shepherd. Therefore "stay with us, Lord," because in all our days and in every circumstance of life we need Thee. "To whom else shall we go?" Our earnest petition will keep Him beside us; for all the redeemed, the Psalmist's words are realised: "They cried to the Lord in their affliction, and He brought them out of their distresses, and He turned the storm into a breeze, and its waves were still . . . and He brought them to the haven which they wished for."¹

SUMMARY FOR MEDITATION

First Prelude.—Contemplate Jesus and the two disciples as they journey along the Roman highway and across the valley. Note the majestic demeanour of our Risen Saviour, the rapt attention of the two disciples.

Second Prelude.—Pray for firm faith and unshaken confidence, for docility of spirit,

¹ Ps. cvi. 28.

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First Point.—Jesus rebukes His erring disciples for their incredulity and dulness of comprehension. He opens the Scriptures to them ; their hearts glow within them.

Second Prelude.—They reach Emmaus. Jesus feigns to go farther, but, yielding to their entreaties, He remains. He reveals Himself “in the breaking of bread.”

Third Prelude.—The disciples are inundated with joy. They return at once to tell their brethren the glad news. Jesus also goes with us and abides with us to the end, provided we constrain Him.

Colloquy.—Thank your Risen Saviour for the lessons He teaches you in this manifestation of Himself. Ask Him to open your intelligence that you may understand the things that are for your peace. Pray for firm faith and confidence. Intercede for those in doubt and sorrow. Beg Jesus to be ever your Divine Companion. Ask Him to keep you close to Him in life and in death.

XV

THE APPARITION TO THE DISCIPLES ON EASTER EVENING

HARMONISED NARRATIVE.—“Now whilst they were speaking these things, when it was late, that same day, being the first day of the week, and the doors were shut where the disciples were gathered together for fear of the Jews: Jesus came and stood in the midst and said to them: Peace be to you; it is I, fear not. But they being troubled and affrighted, supposed they saw a spirit. And He said to them: Why are you troubled, and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? See my hands and feet, that it is I Myself; feel and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as you see Me to have.

“And when He had said this, He shewed them His hands and His feet and His side. But while they yet believed not, but wondered, for joy, He said: Have you here anything to eat? And they offered Him a piece of a broiled fish and a honeycomb. And when He had eaten before them, taking the remains He gave to them. The disciples, therefore, were glad when they saw the Lord.”—*ST. LUKE XXIV. 36-43; ST. JOHN XX. 19, 20.*

“**S**TRIKE the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered, and I will turn My hand to the little ones,”¹ saith the Lord of Hosts. Jesus, the Good Shepherd, had been struck down, cut off from the land of the living, and His sheep—His cherished “little flock,” to whom it was the Father’s good pleasure to give the kingdom—were dispersed. Many of the Galilean disciples of Jesus had already returned home; some were preparing to go back with the last Paschal caravan. The Judean disciples of Jesus had also returned to their homes, some dwelt in Jerusalem or in Bethania and others in Bethphage, while the inner circle—those familiar friends of Jesus—were gathered in the house of John Mark. In

¹ *Zach. xiii. 7.*

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that Upper Room they sat with closed doors "for fear of the Jews," huddling together like frightened sheep during a thunderstorm.

It was night and the Paschal moon still lit up the Holy City. Within the Cenacle, a few lamps hanging from the ceiling or standing upon low columns threw their flickering light upon the countenances of those gathered there. Deep emotion and tense expectancy could be read on each face. Some disciples were overflowing with joy—they had seen their Risen Lord, and, according to His promise, their joy was full. Those who had not yet been so privileged were torn by conflicting emotions—grief, shame, an inexplicable fear, intense longing to see the Risen Saviour, and yet there was an awful dread at the thought of meeting Him again. Much as the Apostles desired to see Jesus, still they had all forsaken Him during His Passion, and how would He receive them? Hope and fear, love and shame, faith and incredulity struggled in their souls for the mastery and prevailed in turn.

We are incapable of realising what these disciples experienced interiorly under these circumstances so unique in the world's history. Perhaps our souls will be filled with kindred emotions, when we stand on the threshold of eternity, waiting for the manifestation of Him whom we know to be so near, longing for and yet dreading His Presence. At that moment, when conscience will bear its unequivocal witness, even in the soul of the saint, there must needs be "thoughts between themselves accusing, or also defending one another."¹

Contemplate these blessed Apostles and disciples as they converse so eagerly or listen so intently. Simon has seen His Lord; he has been forgiven, because, like Mary Magdalene, he loved much. How radiantly happy he appears, and yet how chastened is his expression as he strives to convince the rest that "The Lord is risen indeed." John, "the disciple whom Jesus loved," adds his testimony, and doubtless puts forward that of the Virgin

¹ Rom. ii. 15.

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Mother, who was the first to see her Divine Son on that glorious Easter Day. The two disciples of Emmaus have just told their story, and their narrative has been the means of instilling faith into the souls of some who were hitherto incredulous. They can no longer affirm that the report of their Master's Resurrection depends solely on the "idle tales" of some of the women. St. James the Less sits there, pale and grief-stricken, for, according to an ancient tradition, he has vowed not to touch food until he has seen His Risen Saviour.

St. Andrew, the first called, longs to see Jesus, and wonders, perhaps, why the Lord has only shown Himself to a chosen few. With all those not so favoured, does St. Andrew deem himself too unworthy to gaze upon the Glorious Body? We seem to see St. Thomas leaving the Cenacle, after hearing the narration of the two disciples. He felt too sad at heart to remain, and therefore retired to mourn, ponder, and pray. Probably all the Apostles, except Peter, feared that the Master—if He had indeed risen—would choose others for the work which had been committed to them; if indeed it was to be continued. Even those who believed seem to have had faith rather in the apparition of a disembodied spirit than in the real resurrection of the Human Body of Christ. St. Peter tries to reassure them, and his earnest, grave words bring conviction to some.

Thus they sit questioning, arguing, hoping, fearing, on that blessed Easter Evening—that third day, on which their Master had fulfilled His promise of rising from the grave. Then, in the midst of that eager controversy and strained expectation, "*Jesus came and stood in their midst,*" and

"The Voice that stilled of old
The tempest on the Galilean Lake
Sounds clear above the tumult of their words,
And 'Peace be unto you' reveals to all
Their Master's Presence."

Shalōm lâchem! Peace be unto you—It is His Voice—

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the Good Shepherd has spoken and the frightened little flock has recognised Him immediately. But how came He there? The massive wooden key is still turned in the door. Yes, but "the shut door could not hinder the Body wherein the Divinity resided. He could enter without open doors, who was born without a violation of His Mother's womb,"¹ who passed from the Sepulchre while the stone still closed the entrance.

"*Jesus came and stood in their midst.*" The last time He had stood with His disciples thus gathered around Him was on the eve of His Crucifixion in the Garden of Gethsemani. It was then that "His disciples, leaving Him, all fled away."² Now He stands once more in their midst. Just as they were speaking of Him, He *came*. There was no convulsion of Nature, no bursting open of doors, no message from herald angels. No footfall, no shadow, no sound announced His approach. He came through the closed door in virtue of the subtlety of His Glorious Body. They look at His dear, familiar features, they see His sweet smile, they hear His loved Voice. He is the same, it is He, but yet He is so transformed. Though He veils His Glory, that His own may recognise Him, nevertheless something ethereal seems to proclaim that a stupendous change has taken place in the Sacred Humanity.

"*He said to them : Peace be unto you ; it is I, fear not.*" This was no mere ordinary word of greeting. The words that fall from the lips of the Incarnate Son of God are ever *creative* words, operating what they signify. The Angels sang their hymn of peace over the fields of Bethlehem. At the Last Supper, Jesus had promised the precious gift of peace to His disciples, and when, for the first time, Jesus showed Himself to all His Apostles after His Resurrection, He fulfilled His promise by giving them the blessed legacy of peace : "*Peace be with you : it is I, fear not.*" To the ministering women plunged in grief, Jesus had said : "Rejoice," but to His perplexed and disquieted Apostles, He most fittingly granted peace.

¹ St. Aug. Tr. cxx.

² St. Mark xiv. 50.

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Yet, for the moment so great was the interior tempest in the souls of the disciples, that the dove of peace "found not where her foot might rest." For if the well-known and loved Voice uttered the blessed word "peace," the greeting came from Him who had returned from the grave, from Him whom—in spite of their protestations of fidelity—they had deserted and disbelieved. "Conscience doth make cowards of us all"; small wonder, then, that the disciples "*being troubled and affrighted, supposed that they saw a spirit.*"

Perhaps they remembered how a year previously "Jesus came to them walking upon the sea." Then, too, they had been troubled and had "cried out for fear": "It is an apparition." But Jesus had immediately spoken to them, saying: "Be of good heart, it is I, fear ye not."¹ And when He went up into the boat, they gathered round and adored Him, saying: "Indeed, Thou art the Son of God!" But then His human Body was like unto theirs; He had not passed and re-passed through Death's weird, mysterious portals, and men ever shrink from intercourse with the supernatural; there are few who can face a ghostly visitant without blenching. Therefore, when the Risen Master stood so suddenly and so unaccountably before them, "they were troubled and affrighted." So great was their fear that it rendered them speechless.

Jesus did not allow them to remain thus terrified and paralysed by His Presence. "He said to them: Why are you troubled, and why do thoughts arise in your hearts?" He knew all those doubts and questionings which tormented them, for while "they supposed that they '*gazed upon*' a spirit, their Master looked into the very depths of the troubled souls." The disciples knew that Jesus' Body was not in the tomb; they must also have heard of some inhabitants of Jerusalem who, that very day, had seen one or more of the *many saints* who rose from the dead on Easter morning. To the terrified disciples—so overwrought with the awful events of the last few days—the air seemed charged with supernatural phenomena, as with electricity.

¹ St. Matt. xiv. 26.

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Therefore when Jesus suddenly appeared in their midst, the majority of the Apostles and disciples *supposed* that they were in presence of a disembodied spirit. This appears to have been the disciples' first conception of their Master's Resurrection. Hence they accepted the *identity* of Jesus, but could not believe that It was really His Human Body on which they gazed.

Jesus looks tenderly at His terrified flock. He knows the tyranny of preconceptions, of all that appeals to the senses, and how any awful tragedy unhinges men's perceptive and receptive faculties. He knows, too, men's shortcomings and frailties—in a word, the clay of which they are formed. The Risen Saviour hastens to reassure them: "See My hands and feet, that it is I Myself: feel and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as you see Me to have. And when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet and His side." Jesus had kept the sacred stigmata. How the Apostles now gather closer round; how reverently they touch those pierced hands and feet! "The nails had pierced His hands, the lance had pierced His side, and for the healing of doubting hearts, the marks of the wounds were preserved;"¹ "by His stripes we are healed." Our Lord wished to convince His Apostles of the truth that it was really a human body, although freed from the trammels and conditions of corporeal existence.

"*See My hands and feet.*" With what respect we gaze upon the dead hand of Blessed Margaret Clitherow—the martyr of York who was crushed to death for having given hospitality to God's priests. That precious relic is in the Bar Convent, and it is one of the nuns' greatest treasures. As we look at that withered hand, slightly clenched, there comes before us the scene of that awful martyrdom—the bleeding, prostrate figure, the piled-up stones. When the disciples, obeying Jesus' explicit command, looked at His hands and feet, when they touched His sacred limbs, surely the Crucifixion rose up

¹ St. Aug. Trac. cxxi.

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before their minds. Yet there He stands before them alive, it is no elusive, astral body which cannot be grasped, but human flesh and bones. Watch them as they so reverently touch the stigmata, as they see and really handle His hands. And He grasps once more their hands, hardened with honest labour. The sacred hands of Jesus, how beautiful they are. It is recorded that when, in a vision, St. Theresa was privileged to see one of our Lord's hands she swooned and said afterwards that she could not have looked longer upon it, so great was its beauty. The Apostles and disciples still gaze and touch in silence; those who shrink back and dread to handle Him, He encourages to come forward. Lovingly He stretches out to each those hands so gloriously scarred. Awe-struck, the disciples fix their eyes upon them. They feel the hands that were ever doing the Father's work; the hands that in years gone by had played with Mary's hair and caressed the Virgin Mother; the hands which were so often stretched out in prayer, that broke the bread and miraculously multiplied it, that touched and healed the sick, that were nailed to the Cross. The Apostles touch these sacred hands, and as they do so faith enlightens their souls.

"*See My feet*": those blessed feet which had trodden the highways and byways of Palestine, seeking "the lost sheep of the house of Israel," that were weary when He passed through Samaria, that had trodden the waves, passed through the Courts of the House of the Lord, hastened to succour the afflicted, and raise the dead. Yes, they were the same feet which St. Mary Magdalene had anointed, which she had clasped so lovingly, which had been nailed to the Cross.

Now Jesus shows them His side. St. John had seen Longnius pierce it, and the Apostle testified that "immediately there came out blood and water." All who saw Jesus dead upon His Cross or who helped to bury Him, knew that His side was riven. They had looked at the wide, gaping opening—for the wounds of the dead do not close together again. Doubtless, St. John thought of this

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scene in the Cenacle when, in his old age, he penned his first epistle, and wrote these memorable words: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the word of life . . . we declare unto you."¹

The Apostles could no longer doubt: that Jesus was "alive after His Passion" was evident "by many proofs." They had heard of and seen the empty tomb; the women had related the vision of angels granted to them and delivered the Risen Lord's message to His brethren, in which He had reminded them of His predictions. Then came the news that some had actually seen Him—St. Mary Magdalene, the holy women, St. Peter, the two disciples of Emmaus. Now further proofs are granted, and they recognise the language, figure, shape, countenance, and voice of their Master. They have seen His wounds and touched them. Are all convinced that it is He, who stands before them? Apparently not, some "for joy believed not," but "wondered." They dreaded to accept the evidence of their senses, lest some bitter deception should follow—lest it should be "too good to be true." Much as they longed to believe, they could not shake off their incredulous apprehensions. There was no obstinacy in their souls, no fixed purpose to reject the evidence either of their companions or of their own senses, but simply total inability to overcome their preconceptions. The revulsion from despair, deep sorrow, and incredulity, to hope, ecstatic joy, and firm faith had to be effected gradually.

It is ever thus that the human mind acts. Frequently we hear of men and women being brought face to face with one whom they thought to be dead, and if the news has not been broken gently, we have had examples of death or insanity following from the shock or joy. When the sons of Jacob brought word to their father saying: "Joseph thy son is living; and he is ruler in all the land of Egypt," did the aged patriarch instantly accept the testimony of

¹ St. John i. 1.

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his eleven sons? No, he could not, he dared not accept such good tidings: and we read: "When Jacob heard, *he awaked as it were out of a deep sleep, yet did not believe them.* They, on their side, told the whole order of the thing. And when he saw the wagons, and all that he had sent, his spirit revived, and he said: "It is enough for me, *if Joseph, my son, be yet living,* I will go and see him before I die."¹ This gives us a striking example of man's inability to pass instantly from despair to hope, from sorrow to joy, however much he may desire to do so, nay, just because of the very vehemence of his desire.

Seeing that some "believed not for joy," Jesus now gives them another proof." He said: "Have you anything to eat?" From St. Mark's Gospel, we gather that the Apostles had finished their evening meal, but were still at table when Jesus appeared. He deigned to ask them for food, and to partake of it in their presence, not because He needed it, since He had a glorified Body, but in order to convince them that He had truly risen.

"They offered Him a piece of broiled fish and a honeycomb"—the remains of their frugal meal—for the disciples were poor, and bread, fish, and honey were their staple foods. The Mediterranean and the Sea of Galilee teemed with fish and in Palestine, even when the corn and olives failed, there was abundance of honey. Jesus took the food and ate it in their presence. It could not, of course, nourish Him, but was volatilised by Divine power. "When He had eaten before them, taking the remains, He gave to them." Now the disciples were convinced that what they saw was no mere creation of an overwrought imagination, no delusion, no phantom body. It was truly He Himself and no other. The veil fell from their eyes, the heavy load from their souls: "*The disciples therefore were glad when they saw the Lord.*"

They worshipped their Risen Saviour; He embraced them and assured them of His forgiveness. Their joy was full, for He had seen them again, and they entered too,

¹ Gen. xlv. 26.

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into the joy of their Lord. "*The disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.*" He alone who sounds the deepest recesses of the human heart knows how intensely they rejoiced, how unspeakable was the fulness of their joy. To each of those privileged disciples we may apply the words of the wise man: "The heart knoweth the bitterness of his own soul, in his joy the stranger shall not intermeddle."¹

How slowly and almost reluctantly the disciples of Jesus accepted the Resurrection of their Lord as a reality. They had passed through a period of terrible suffering and bereavement. Then on the third day rumours had reached them: "The Lord is risen indeed." Hours of suspense followed. Last of all, when the shades of evening had fallen on that blessed Easter Day, the Risen Saviour had manifested Himself, shown them His hands, feet, and side, spoken and eaten with them as of old. Then all their doubts vanished and joy inundated their souls. He is risen, to die no more! Never had they looked for such a stupendous miracle, and their joy on seeing Him once more was as intense as their sorrow had been when they had lost Him.

Nor did their joy fail when He vanished from their presence. They believed firmly that He had indeed risen and were ready to seal their testimony to the Resurrection with their blood. Never again, for one moment, did they waver in their belief in their Lord's Resurrection. They knew for certain that the Body in which He appeared to them on that blessed Easter evening was the same which they had known during His human Life, identically and substantially the same, although differing from the latter inasmuch as the Resurrection Body had its special qualities. Of one of these, subtlety, they had seen the proof since Jesus had passed through the closed doors. They also saw that He could render Himself invisible and visible when, where, and how He pleased. As regards the brightness of Jesus' Risen Body, three of the Apostles—Peter, James, and John—had seen It momentarily transfigured on Mount Thabor. But when our Lord appeared to the

¹ Prov. xiv. 10.

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Apostles for the first time, St. Augustine says "That the glory, wherewith the righteous shall shine like the sun in the kingdom of the Father—that is, in Christ's Body—we believe to have been veiled rather than not to have been present. He accommodated His Presence to man's weak sight, and presented Himself in such a form as His disciples could gaze upon and recognise."¹ Jesus could not reveal His full glory to His disciples when He appeared to them during the "great forty days," for they would have been so overcome by His Majesty as to have been incapable of listening to His words—like Peter, James, and John on Mount Thabor, they would have prostrated themselves and been "very much afraid."

Moses once implored the Most High, saying: "Show me Thy Glory," and God replied: "Thou canst not see My face . . . and live. . . . But when My Glory shall pass, I will set thee in the hole of the rock, and protect thee with My right hand, till I pass."² And when the Lord was come down in a cloud, Moses stood before Him, calling upon the name of the Lord. And when He passed before Him, Moses, making haste, bowed down prostrate unto the earth adoring." But "when Moses came down from the Mount Sinai, he knew not that his face was horned" (*i.e.* shining and sending forth rays of light) from the conversation of the Lord, and Aaron and the children of Israel seeing the face of Moses horned, were afraid to come near." The Law-giver of Israel therefore had to cover his face when he promulgated the Law to the Jews. Thus we may believe the Risen Saviour—He of whom Moses was the type—when promulgating His Law of the New Covenant to "the little flock" which He had chosen, did not come to them "horned, but He covered His face again, if at any time He spoke with them."

The manifestation of that glory in all its fulness would have been an obstacle, rather than a help. Moreover, they had so many other infallible proofs since as Cornelius à Lapide remarks: "The language, figure, shape, counte-

¹ St. Aug. *de Civ. Dei.*

² Exod. xxiv., xxv., *passim.*

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nance, wounds, touch of our Lord, His eating and drinking, His conversation, assertions, predictions, miracles, the testimony of angels, the oracles of prophets, all these conjointly, most assuredly demonstrated our Lord's Resurrection." Jesus had turned His hand "to the little ones" and gathered His sheep together again. With adoring love and faith, they pressed around the Good Shepherd—so unutterably *glad*, because they once more "*saw the Lord.*"

As we continue to contemplate, in adoring silence, the Risen Master surrounded by His loving followers, and note the peace and joy that reigns in the Cenacle, may we not learn two other lessons, over and above those He has already taught us? The first of these is, that Jesus ever comes to the assistance of His disciples in their hour of greatest need. Whatever be their trials and sorrows, He visits and strengthens them by enabling them to hold fast. To those who mourn for a wife, husband, child, or parent, He says: "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in Me, although he be dead, shall live," and bids them look forward to that day when "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and death shall be no more, nor mourning nor crying, nor sorrow shall be any more," for the former things shall have "passed away."¹

To those who tremble and fear in the anticipation or under the burden of some trial, He whispers: "Peace be to you, it is I, fear not," and He enables them to realise that the cross ever conceals and reveals the Presence of their Redeemer. He comes, too, to those who doubt and are perplexed, provided they love Him and sincerely desire to know the truth. He opens their intelligence and enables them to grasp the teaching of the Church. To those who are groping for the truth, in the desert region, without the One Fold, He sends His messengers and teaches these inquirers that *prayer* and *humility* dispel doubts far more than endless reasoning and questioning. Then in answer to their earnest prayer: "Lord, that I may see," He grants them the gift of faith and guides them to the Church.

¹ Apoc. xxi. 4.

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The disciples' intellectual difficulties vanished the instant they recognised their Master, whom to know is eternal life. The great error of so many troubled souls is that they seek to measure God's Infinite Perfections and the truths which He has revealed by the infinitesimal width of their intelligence. They strive to compass the Almighty and forget that all supernatural truths are beyond the intelligence of man, who is incapable of testing what is infinite and incomprehensible. God turns His Hand "to the little ones"—to those who humbly implore His aid. He draws near and immediately their eyes are opened. To know the Risen Saviour, to do the Holy Will of God are the surest means of spiritual enlightenment—of knowing "of the doctrine" that it "be of God."

Now fixing our eyes on the Precious Wounds, we ask our Lord reverently why He has kept these marks of His bitter Passion. Various answers have been given to this question, of which we will mention four.

1. These Wounds were a means of identifying the Risen Body of Jesus with that which hung upon the Cross. The disciples who saw Jesus in the Cenacle heard His voice, recognised His sacred features and nevertheless 'they were afraid.' It was only after they had seen His hands and feet and felt the wound in His side, that they believed and rejoiced.

2. The Wounds of the Sacred Humanity are an everlasting proof of the love of the Good Shepherd for His sheep. The choirs of angels, as well as the redeemed will ever contemplate them with adoring love. Throughout eternity Jesus will be worshipped as "the Lamb that was slain," to whom the united choirs of men and angels will ascribe "power and divinity, and wisdom and strength, and honour and glory and benediction."¹ As the scars of a brave soldier proclaim his valour, so the sacred marks of the Wounds of Jesus sound His praises, chant His everlasting love for the sons of men.

3. He bears these glorious scars as our High Priest and Victim. Raising His pierced hands, He pleads for sinful

¹ Apoc. v. 12.

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men, and His Heavenly Father, seeing the marks of His Passion, accepts His petitions and pardons even the greatest sinners, providing they repent.

4. Jesus keeps the stigmata so that, when He comes to judge the world, sinners "shall look on Him whom they have pierced" and these trophies of heroic combat and undying love will strike terror into the souls of the wicked, while the just will draw from them motives of hope and joy. Those who have mourned for the sins which caused those sacred hands and feet to be pierced will gaze upon them with confidence, knowing that the Judge, who died for their salvation and rose again for their justification, will not reject their penitent, adoring love.

SUMMARY FOR MEDITATION

First Prelude.—Represent the scene which was enacted in the Cenacle when Jesus appeared to the disciples and Apostles who were gathered together on that Easter evening.

Second Prelude.—Ask that Jesus may visit your soul, that you may recognise Him and profit by His visit.

First Point.—The Apostles and the disciples of Emmaus were eagerly discussing the wondrous events of Easter Day; their sentiments were mingled. Some feared, others rejoiced; some believed, others were incredulous. Suddenly Jesus appeared, but they were terrified.

Second Point.—Jesus reassured them, showed them His hands, feet, and side. He asked them for food and partook of it. Then they were convinced of His identity and rejoiced.

Third Point.—From this manifestation of the Risen Saviour we may learn: (1) To trust our Lord, who never deserts His own in their sorrows, perplexities, and doubts. (2) To love and venerate the marks of the Sacred Passion in Jesus' hands, feet, and side, since they prove His identity, His love, and His valour. (3) To thank Him for pleading for us in Heaven, showing His wounds to the Eternal Father.

Colloquy.—Worship your Risen Lord in union with the redeemed—now in Heaven—who saw Him on that Easter evening. Ask for firm faith in the words and promises of Christ. Beg that in all your trials you may lean on and look up to your Lord. Venerate His sacred scars and thank Him for His everlasting love. Give yourself to Him for time and for eternity.

XVI

THE INSTITUTION OF THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE

“ He said therefore to them again : Peace be to you. As the Father hath sent Me, I also send you. When He had said this, He breathed on them, and He said to them : Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them : and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained.”—ST. JOHN XX. 21-23.

WHEN Jesus appeared to the Eleven and to the other disciples in the Cenacle on Easter Sunday evening, the first words which He uttered were : “ Peace be to you : It is I, fear not.” These creative words on the lips of our Emmanuel communicated to them the blessed gift of peace, assured them of His friendship and forgiveness for their cowardice and incredulity. The Saviour’s greeting—Shalōm lâchem—had restored their confidence in Him, raised their expiring hopes, and reassured them as regards the past and the present : Jesus had risen ; He had pardoned them, all might again be well. If, at this solemn moment, when “ the disciples were glad ” because “ they saw the Lord,” they were sufficiently collected to look to the future, doubtless the thought of a continuation of their former life with Him, taken up under more favourable conditions, rose before their minds. Or perhaps they had no thought except for the present. Their Master had returned from the grave, having conquered death, and they rejoiced with Him, congratulated Him, and were so glad to be with Him. The cloud-banks of sorrow and incredulity had been dispersed by the manifestation of the Sun of Justice. Jesus, the Prince of Peace, was with them again, and the words which St. Peter uttered when He

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saw His Master transfigured, fittingly express their sentiments: "Lord, it is good for us to be here."

But the ecstatic joy of the Cenacle, like that of Thabor, was designed only as a means to an end—it was to be transitory, not a permanent state. The Lord had need of them—of their active service, rather than of their loving contemplation. There was work for them in the Vineyard of the Lord of Hosts—the field of the whole world lay before them. Jesus' object in visiting His Church on that Easter evening was twofold. He desired to console the Apostles by assuring them of His identity—to prove that He had really risen again—and also to equip them for the great work of evangelising the world by bestowing on the Eleven the sublime "power of the keys," which He had previously given to St. Peter as the Head of the Church.

For this particular communication of power and authority the Apostles needed a special preparation of soul. The voice of God in the soul is as "the whistling of a gentle air," He speaks not there in the tempest nor earthquake—neither in the benumbing of fear, nor in the tumult of joy. Therefore "Jesus said to them again: Peace be to you." He calmed their souls and thus prepared them to receive that part of the great commission which He was about to reveal, and for the execution of which they were to be endowed with Divine authority.

The great "Apostle and High-Priest of our confession, Jesus,"¹ far from cancelling the favours and dignity which He had previously bestowed upon the Twelve, confirmed and increased them. That Easter Sunday was the birthday of the Catholic Church, even as Pentecost saw her baptism. How inexpressibly solemn was that scene when Jesus, the Incarnate Son of God, gave to His chosen ambassadors, and through them to their successors throughout all ages, their divine credentials! How it must have been indelibly printed on the souls of all there present! Jesus addressed Himself to the Eleven—*i.e.* to the Apostles who, with the exception of St. Thomas, were present. The

¹ Heb. iii. 1.

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two disciples of Emmaus were there also, and probably some others, but "the power of the keys" was entrusted to the teaching Church only, not to the rank and file of the faithful. St. Thomas either received these sacred keys—although absent—in virtue of his being a member of the corporate body of the Apostles, or it was communicated to him later, when his incredulity had given place to faith in the Resurrection of his Lord. Theologians are divided in their opinions as regards this subject.

Speaking to the Apostles only, therefore, Jesus said: "As the Father hath sent Me, I also send you." The great Apostle and High Priest—the *One Sent* by the love and power of the Father—sends his disciples forth to continue His work upon earth. They are sent by Him *as* He is sent by the Father. There was to be *similarity* not *equality* between the mission of the "One Sent" by the Father and the Apostolic College—the teaching Church. Jesus came to redeem, to sanctify, to save men by shedding His Precious Blood; His disciples were sent to make known His Redemption and to apply its fruits to souls, through the exercise of their pastoral and priestly office. "*As the Father hath sent Me, I also send you.*" "For God so loved the world, as to give His only begotten Son; that whosoever believeth in Him, may not perish, but may have everlasting life."¹ Jesus came in obedience to the Father's wish, He offered Himself as a Victim on the Cross, and the Apostles went forth preaching Christ crucified and remission of sins in His Name. Thus the Church continues the Redeemer's work.

"*As the Father hath sent Me, I also send you.*" Jesus came on earth to reveal the Father to sinful humanity, and speaking to St. Philip, He said: "He that seeth Me, seeth the Father also . . . I am in the Father and the Father in Me."² In like manner, the Church reveals Christ to men. She hands down His teaching; her saints show forth in a measure His virtues, and she proclaims the grand truth that Christ is with her all her days. Her very existence throughout the ages, Her victorious onward march

¹ St. John iii. 16.

² *Ibid.*, xiv. 9.

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in face of bitter persecution and opposition, Her unity of doctrine and worship prove that Christ, her Lord, abides with Her. The Church is no mere organisation, but a living organism. The Holy Catholic Church is the Mystical Body of Christ Himself.

"As the Father hath sent Me, I also send you." Now we know that Jesus came with power and authority from God. How often He told His opponents this when they questioned His right to teach and rebuke! He said: "The Father loveth the Son, and He gave all things into His hand,"¹ and again, He told His disciples that *all* power was given Him in heaven and in earth. That power was given Him by God, the Father, and He sent forth His Apostles in virtue of that power. It was thus that the Apostles understood their mission, and St. Paul explicitly states this truth: "All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Christ and hath given us the ministry of reconciliation. . . . For Christ therefore we are ambassadors, God, as it were, exhorting by us."²

"As the Father hath sent Me, I also send you." The Father sent Jesus to give life to man. Like the Father, the Son is essential Life and He imparts this to souls. He tells us: "My sheep hear My voice . . . and I give them life everlasting."³ The Church continues this communication of life by her Sacraments of the dead, by which men's souls are vivified, and by the Sacraments of the living, which bestow that life more abundantly. There is no life apart from the Mystical Body of Christ, for all who are "alive unto God" by sanctifying grace belong either to the soul and body of the Church or to the soul alone like those other sheep not of this fold, whom the Good Shepherd will one day bring into the "One Fold" under the "One Shepherd."

"As the Father hath sent Me, I also send you." Therefore, since "The Father . . . hath given all judgment to the Son,"⁴ the Son has given judicial power to His Church.

¹ St. John iii. 35.

² 2 Cor. v. 18.

³ St. John x. 27.

⁴ St. John x. 22.

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She is empowered by Him to bind and loose, to remit and to retain men's sins. He who hears the Church, hears Christ, for Christ lives and works in His Mystical Body. All the graces men receive through her ministry come from Him, who is "the Fountain of Living Waters." And this power to do judgment, Jesus solemnly communicated to His Apostles on the great day of His glorious Resurrection. Having declared that He delegated to them the power which He had received from His Heavenly Father, He proceeded to explain in what this power consisted :

"He breathed on them, and He said to them : Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them ; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained." Jesus, by His Death, had atoned for the iniquities of the world, and, on the occasion of His first manifestation to the Church, He places, as it were, in the hands of His Apostles, the treasures of His Redemption—the merits to be applied at Her discretion to the souls of her children. How characteristic of the Good Shepherd to act thus ! His first thought was ever for the straying sheep—for the souls He loved better than His Life. In imparting this power, Jesus "breathed" upon the Apostles—a symbolical action ; for as when God created Adam, He "breathed into his face the breath of life, and man became a living soul,"¹ so when God regenerates man, He breathes into his soul the Holy Ghost, "the Lord and Giver of Life, who proceedeth from the Father and the Son." As St. Augustine says : "By breathing, Jesus showed that the Holy Spirit came not only from the Father but also from the Son." To the Jew, this action was even more expressive than to others, since the one word in Hebrew signifies "breath" and "spirit."

"*Receive ye the Holy Ghost.*" Had they not previously possessed the gift of sanctifying grace, since they were the "friends" and "brethren" of Jesus ? Yes, but for their personal sanctification. Now they received—not indeed the fulness of His gifts, that was reserved for Pentecost—but

¹ Gen. ii. 7.

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the first breezes of that mighty rushing wind, those gifts which gave them power to absolve or retain men's sins. The power of absolving from sin is common to all three Persons of the Blessed Trinity, but it is here ascribed especially to the third Person—the Holy Ghost, the Sanctifier, who carries on the work of Jesus by applying His merits to the individual soul, through the channels of the sacraments.

“*Receive,*” for our Lord forces His graces on none : He wills the co-operation of man in the work of his own sanctification and salvation. If it be true that Jesus chooses out some, and invites them to labour actively in His Vineyard to receive the priestly dignity, it is equally true that He leaves them free to accept or reject His offer, though if they decide to decline, it is to their own loss.

“*Receive the Holy Ghost,*” the Paraclete whom the Saviour had promised to send upon them. In virtue of His power, the Apostles could discharge the priestly office of saying Mass—a power given at the Last Supper on Maundy Thursday and, to this, was now added the stupendous ministry of reconciliation. To God's priests—frail men like the rest of the sons of Adam—has been given the power of remitting and retaining sins. True, the power of forgiving sin must pertain essentially to Him who is offended by sin. God alone by His *own* power can absolve the penitent sinner, but nevertheless the priest has a delegated, ministerial power, like that of an ambassador, and our Heavenly Father grants the pardon to penitents, through the instrumentality of the priest, who supplies the absolving hand and the voice.

The Church has always thus interpreted these words concerning the remitting and retaining of sins, and she forbids her children under the severest penalties to wrest our Lord's words to the simple declaration that God forgives sins, or to the promulgation of the Gospel. How many millions now in Heaven or in Purgatory owe their salvation to the blessed “*power of the keys*” given to the Church in all ages ! On that sacred first day of the week, when Jesus rose from the tomb and appeared for the first

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time to His disciples collectively, He communicated to them the power to forgive sins, in His Name and by His Power. Before He came, they were overwhelmed with grief, trembling for their safety, confused and humbled at the thought of their own sins and infidelities. In a few moments all was changed : “ the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.” He brought peace to their troubled souls and then, enduing them with power from on high, bade them forgive or retain the sins of their fellows according to the dispositions of the latter.

This awful power, too, was given without restriction, as far as the mercy of God is concerned. To *all* who are truly penitent, all sins can be remitted. The moment a sinner has the right dispositions, his sins *are* remitted, when the priest pronounces the words of absolution. There is no gradual purifying of the soul as regards the guilt of sin ; as the inception of all life is instantaneous, and not a slow process of evolution, as one creative act of God brings a human soul into existence, so one act of the priestly ministry of absolution restores the dead soul to supernatural life.

As Jesus communicated to His Apostles the Divine power of forgiving sins as His ambassadors, on that Easter Sunday evening, He looked down the vista of the ages, He knew each burdened soul who would profit by His Precious Blood in the Sacrament of Penance, He knew how many absolutions were reserved for me. “ Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift ! for the infinite mercy of our Emmanuel ! ”

Men do not deal thus with their fellows, to confess is to be condemned by our fellows. St. Augustine¹ writes thus, touching this sacrament : “ Who can be sure of the Emperor’s pardon ? And yet money is spent, seas are crossed, storms are faced, nay, even death itself is faced to escape death. Man supplicates man, uncertain of the issue. And yet the Keys of the Church are surer than the hearts of princes ; for, by these Keys, whatever is loosed on earth shall be loosed in Heaven. The spirit in which

¹ In his sermon 351 “ On the Utility of Penance.”

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the sinner humbles himself to the Church is more honourable, the labour imposed is less, and eternal death is avoided without running the risk of temporal death." Truly, it is better to fall into the hands of God than of men, as the Royal Psalmist confesses.

Men scoff at the practice of confession, they propagate the most vile calumnies against this sacrament, and look upon it as an invention of the Evil One. It was thus they spoke of our Lord when He cast out devils, but the Church continues her ministry, and by this means exercises those spiritual powers bequeathed to her by Christ. Well may the devils instigate unbelievers to attack that sacrament, which is so powerful in overthrowing Satan's power. There, countless miracles of healing and resurrection are worked, and this stupendous power is given to the ministers of the Church "for us men and for our salvation." Do we value our absolutions? Do we remember that each one is the application of the Precious Blood to our souls individually? The priest pronounces the words of absolution, but the pardon comes from God Himself, who ratifies His delegate's words.

Now we will once more fix our gaze upon the Apostles. Jesus had made them "kings and priests unto God." He had inundated their souls with the deepest peace and the purest joy. They had identified Him as their Master, and they believed firmly that He had risen again. What a transformation the visit of the Good Shepherd had effected, as indeed it ever does! He whom they had hoped in as the Messiah, and then lost all faith in as Israel's Redeemer when they saw Him on the Cross, had come back to them and more than justified their fondest dreams. Surely, even when He vanished from their eyes, all their thoughts must have been centred in Him. They could think and speak of no other. At any moment, at table or walking, He might appear to them. Some, like St. Peter and the two disciples of Emmaus, had already seen Him twice. When would He come again? They knew not, for old relations were changed. At least, He would manifest

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Himself to them in Galilee, and meanwhile they lived as in His Presence, ever longing and desiring Him, ever preparing to welcome Him.

When does He visit our poor souls? When we kneel at the altar of God and receive the Bread of Life. In the Cenacle of our souls, when the doors are shut to all earthly preoccupations and the Christian's thoughts and aspirations are centred in Jesus, He comes and visits the soul, and the peace which He imparts is a proof of His Divine Presence. In spite of our unworthiness He manifests Himself to us; by faith we, too, see the Lord—though veiled under the sacramental species—and our souls are filled with joy.

SUMMARY FOR MEDITATION

First Prelude.—Represent Jesus in the midst of His Apostles, breathing upon them, as a sign of the pouring forth of the Holy Ghost.

Second Prelude.—Ask for the precious gift of peace, and of gratitude for the sacrament of reconciliation.

First Point.—Jesus breathes upon His Apostles, bestows the Spirit upon them, and sends them forth as the Father had sent Him.

Second Point.—The mission of the Church is (1) to continue Christ's work upon earth, (2) to reveal Him to the world, (3) to teach with authority, (4) to apply to men's souls the fruits of the Redemption, (5) to exercise the judicial power of the keys.

Third Point.—Jesus formally instituted the sacrament of penance. No sins and no sinners were excepted. Jesus thought of all His weak, sinful children, and provided for their needs. The Apostles' disposition and sentiments when Jesus left them.

Colloquy.—Thank our Lord for the precious gift of peace, for your many absolutions. Ask that you may always profit fully by them. Make an act of contrition for past negligences. Thank our Lord for the grace of being one of the faithful, entitled to all the means of grace provided by the Church. Ask that, like the Apostles, all your thoughts may henceforth be centred in your Risen Saviour.

XVII

THE APPARITION OF THE RISEN SAVIOUR TO ST. THOMAS

“NOW Thomas, one of the Twelve, who is called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came ” to visit His sorrowing Apostles and disciples on that first Easter Day. “ The other disciples therefore said to him : We have seen the Lord. But he said to them : Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.” Thus Thomas threw down the gauntlet of his incredulity and challenged his Divine Master to submit to these conditions as the *sine qua non* of his acceptance of the truth of the Resurrection.¹

“ Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh,”² and when the incredulous Apostle uttered this defiant challenge, he lay bare the wounds of his own soul. Let us examine what we are told concerning St. Thomas, that we may the better grasp his character. “ Thomas ” is transliterated from the Hebrew word, as “ Didymus ” is the Greek word for “ twin.” Hence we know that Thomas had a twin brother or sister. St. John alone gives to this Apostle the name of Didymus, whence we may presume that in Asia Minor, where St. John wrote, this was the name by which Thomas was known among the Gentile converts, who were certainly more familiar with Greek than Hebrew. In the Synoptists, this Apostle is only mentioned as “ one of the Twelve,” and in these books no special incident or saying is recorded of him. He is generally coupled with St. Matthew in the second group of four

¹ St. John xx.

² St. Matt. xii. 34.

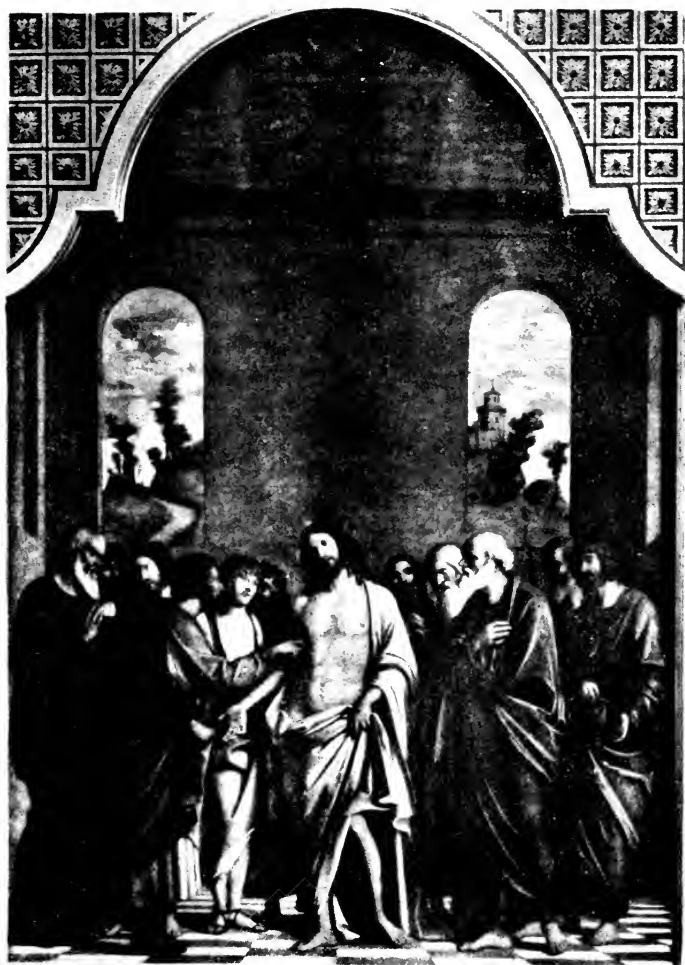


Photo Mansell.

Our Lord appears to St. Thomas.

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—the names of the Twelve being arranged in three groups. In all these groups Simon Peter stands first, and Judas last. Hence it seems probable that the Apostles' names are given according to the priority of their call to the apostleship or their precedence in the apostolic College.

In St. John's Gospel, Thomas comes more to the fore, especially in the later incidents recorded. A few of his words are given, and thus we obtain an insight into his character and temperament. There are three scenes in the fourth Gospel in which St. Thomas' words are recorded. Thus, when Jesus announced His intention of returning to Judea—which He had quitted after the Feast of the Dedication, when the Jews had threatened to stone Him—St. Thomas, in company with his fellow Apostles, sought to dissuade Him. But Jesus refused to yield to their entreaties, and gave them to understand that, for the moment, there was no danger—He was still walking "in the day." Whereupon St. Thomas, not grasping our Lord's meaning, exclaimed generously: "Let us also go, that we may die with Him."

Some three months later, Jesus having instituted the Holy Eucharist, uttered His solemn farewell discourse. He told the Twelve that He was about to leave them to go to the Father, but that He would return again and take them with Him. Then He added: "Whither I go you know, and the way you know. Thomas saith to Him: Lord, we know not whither Thou goest; and how can we know the way?"¹ The third time St. John draws our special attention to St. Thomas is in connection with our Lord's Resurrection, which this Apostle refused to believe, unless he had tangible proofs of his own selection. Jesus, having condescended to His incredulous Apostle's presumptuous exactions, St. Thomas yielded and confessed Christ's Divinity.

From these examples we see that St. Thomas was slow to understand, strongly attached to his own views and yet capable of generous self-sacrifice and enthusiasm. He was

¹ St. John xiv. 5.

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loyal to his Divine Master and ready to acknowledge his own faults when he realised his guilt. He seems to have been somewhat a pessimist, preferably looking on the dark side of a question. At times he put the visible and tangible things of earth before the unseen spiritual realities. Yet he loved his Master, and in a sense his incredulity sprang from the very depth of that attachment for Jesus. He dare not open his soul to hope lest another terrible deception should follow. St. Thomas' incredulity may be traced to his overweening confidence in his own judgment, his morbid, melancholy temperament and his erroneous preconceptions regarding the work and Person of the Messiah. Doubtless Thomas longed to believe, but faith is a gift of God—a gift He grants to those who ask for it with humility.

Having considered the character of St. Thomas, we shall now be better able to meditate on the second manifestation of our Lord to His Apostles when their number was complete. Jesus had appeared to them on Easter Day, late in the evening, when St. Thomas was absent. This manifestation took place on the fourth day of the Paschal Octave, which closed on the Friday following. Most devout Jews remained in Jerusalem during the whole of the eight days, and the Apostles had evidently done so. The Jewish Sabbath—in this year—followed the eighth day of the feast, and the caravans never left Jerusalem on a Sabbath day. As the preparations for the pilgrims' departure required time and labour, it is not difficult to understand why we still find the Apostles in Jerusalem on this first day of the week, eight days after the first manifestation of the Risen Saviour to His Church.

What a week of mingled emotions and experiences that had been! Jesus had disappeared from their sight after having granted them the precious gift of peace, and instituted the Sacrament of Penance. Their souls were inundated with joy, but there was, nevertheless, one shadow still hovering over them—Thomas, their companion and brother, had not seen the Lord and, plunged in grief, obstinately refused to accept their united testimony. We

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can imagine how promptly they sought him out, how eagerly they exclaimed: "The Lord is risen indeed." One and all gave their clear testimony; there was no discrepancy which might have furnished an excuse for doubt. They described how they had seen, heard, and touched their Lord. No detail of that memorable visit was omitted.

How did Thomas receive their testimony and entreaties? With incredulity; taking up the details given by them he declared emphatically that, unless the assurances given to them, were granted to him he would not believe: "Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe."

Poor Thomas laid down his conditions very explicitly; he seemed to have resented our Lord's having manifested Himself to the Apostles during his absence. He refused their verbal testimony and asked for tangible, visible proofs. His dejection must have been profound during that long week. The more the ten spoke of their joy and manifested it on their features, the sadder Thomas was. Their happiness and calm assurance jarred upon him, whose soul was so out of harmony with theirs. They entreated him to yield; Peter related his special experience, the beloved Apostle added his testimony, and doubtless the blessed Mother of Jesus spoke with Thomas, but still he held out—the more he was urged to yield, the more obstinately he refused. "I will not believe." That was his final resolution.

Matters seem to have come to a deadlock—yes, *seemed*, but they never *are* when Jesus is one of those interested. He was pitifully watching His wandering sheep, and timing His manifestation to the needs of the case. Thomas was incredulous and he must suffer for his obstinacy—at least for a time. The Master would not give in at once to the presumption of His Apostle. Therefore Thomas was left to himself for a whole week, though during these days we may be sure the others prayed for him and renewed their persuasions.

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How consoling it is to see the faults of the Apostles so frankly related. Because they were the princes of the Church, the Evangelists did not deem it necessary to conceal their faults and failings. They are represented as men having the frailties of the children of Adam—Peter presumptuous, James and John fiery and ambitious, Thomas incredulous, all the Twelve on several occasions guilty of jealousy, murmuring, and disputing. Grace does not fill the valleys, lower the hills, and thus level all the characters of men to one monotonous level. Each keeps his own individuality which, if the Christian be faithful, is transformed gradually and sanctified by the action of the Holy Ghost. Therefore we must take patience with ourselves, and adopt only those practices of piety and good works which are suited to our particular temperament and character. There are multiple roads of holiness, but since all converge on Heaven, what matters it which one God assigns to us? Also this consideration should teach us not to judge others from our standpoint; nor to lose patience with all whose views do not coincide with ours. The Catholic Church, the Spouse of Christ, is remarkable for the diversity of her children—no two saints present exactly the same characteristics. “All the glory of the King’s daughter is within in golden borders, clothed round about with varieties.”¹ “It is granted to her that she should clothe herself with fine linen, glittering and white, for the fine linen (garments) are the justification of saints.”²

The eight days of weary suspense passed slowly, during which St. Thomas could think of naught else than his crucified Lord. He thought over the past and the present, and he must have wondered what the future would bring. The octave of that Easter Day came at last, and doubtless, in consequence of the entreaties of those who had seen Jesus, St. Thomas was persuaded to remain with them in that hallowed spot, so fraught with memories of the Lord’s last hours—His solemn farewell, the institution of the Holy Eucharist and of the Sacrament of Penance, the scene of

¹ Ps. xlv. 14.

² Apoc. xix. 8.

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His first manifestation to the disciples collectively. St. Thomas was still incredulous ; he kept to his conditions : " Except I see and feel, I will in no wise believe." We do not know whether, during the week, Jesus had shown Himself again to the ten Apostles, probably the apparition to James the Less was granted during this period. With all his failings, Thomas would not break with his brethren, so " after eight days again His disciples were within " the sacred walls of the Cenacle, and this time " Thomas was with them." When the day of his visitation came, Thomas was at his post, with his brethren. It is ever there that God's graces come to the faithful.

Jesus had waited for them to assemble. The Good Shepherd took the first step and at last went to the assistance of His incredulous disciple. Apparently, only the Eleven were gathered together, no others are mentioned, and as usual the conversation turned on the one subject of their thoughts—their Lord and Master. We seem to hear St. Thomas repeating his firm determination and closing his statement so emphatically, " I will in no wise believe." How often he had uttered those words during the eight days between the two apparitions of Jesus to His Apostles. But he has said them for the last time, for suddenly, as it happened on Easter Sunday : " Jesus cometh, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said : Peace be unto you." How glad the disciples were when they again saw the Lord. Then turning to Thomas Jesus said : " Put in thy finger hither and see My hands ; and bring hither thy hand and put it into My side ; and be not faithless but believing." How Jesus reveals His knowledge of the inmost soul ; He enumerates each condition laid down by Thomas and offers to comply with them. What condescension on His part, and what a humiliation for Thomas ! Yet, as the fault had been committed in presence of all, the reparation was also to be made publicly.

In thus condescending to St. Thomas' weakness, Jesus showed His infinite loving-kindness. He gave His erring

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Apostle the assurance that He knew and understood his special difficulties—as He knows and understands ours, for has He not fashioned us? And while the Risen Saviour brings Thomas back to the right path He confirms the faith of the other Apostles and increases their joy. Jesus did not reproach Thomas as He had rebuked the “evil and adulterous generation” that asked for some sign of His Power.

The moment St. Thomas was permitted to see the Risen Body of our Lord, the scales fell from his eyes; instantly and spontaneously, with true faith, he made his loving act of adoration—his magnificent confession of faith in his Lord’s Divinity: “My Lord and my God!” The terseness of the words reveals the Apostle’s deep emotion. Words are few in proportion as feelings are deep. Thomas, the last to accept the fact of the real Resurrection of Jesus, surpassed his fellows in the fulness of his confession. “My Lord and My God!” His Lord and Master, whom the sorrowing disciple had seen crucified, whom he had mourned, was indeed alive again, and this proved Him to be the Conqueror of Death and therefore true God. The conviction of the reality of the Resurrection and the certainty of Jesus’ Divinity came to Thomas with overwhelming force. The more incredulous he had been previously, the more firmly he believed when the Risen Saviour manifested Himself and laid bare the incredulity and obstinacy of His erring Apostle.

“Thomas saw and touched the Man, and confessed the God whom he neither saw nor touched. By means of the one, he believed the other undoubtingly.”¹ It seems probable that Thomas really did handle our Lord’s hands and feet, though he may have believed, before so doing, that Jesus really stood before him alive. The other Apostles had touched Christ in response to the Master’s invitation; Thomas had insisted on doing the same as a condition of his accepting the Resurrection, and Jesus distinctly bade him touch the marks of the sacred Wounds.

¹ St. Aug., Tr. cxxi.

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Therefore St. Thomas in later years could have also borne his testimony, like St. John, to the Word of Life, whom he had both "looked upon" and "handled." St. Gregory the Great writes thus on this subject: "Our Lord gave His flesh to be touched; that flesh which He had introduced through shut doors. Herein two wonderful and contradictory things appear (according to human reason), namely that after the Resurrection He had a Body incorruptible and yet palpable. For that which is palpable must be corruptible, and that which is incorruptible must be impalpable. But He showed himself incorruptible and palpable, to prove that His Body, after His Resurrection, was the same in nature as before but different in glory."

Thus the Wounds of Jesus, now glorified, wrought the healing of Thomas' soul. Not only did the Apostle accept the truth of the Resurrection but, aided by the grace of God, he instantly deduced the logical conclusion—His Risen Lord must be his God. What intense supernatural joy filled the soul of Thomas when he accepted the testimony of Jesus and that of his own senses. "My Lord and my God!" How often he repeated it, and each time the wondrous scene must have flashed before him. On the burning plains of India where later he evangelised, far from his former companions, surely the thought of the loving condescension of Jesus and his own vivid realisation of our Lord's identity consoled and strengthened him in the midst of his arduous labours for his Master!

"*My Lord and my God.*" How many thousands of the disciples of Jesus have caught up St. Thomas' confession. Though we may have been baptized as Catholics in infancy and always been nourished on the articles of faith, yet there are few who cannot recall some moment in their lives when a sudden deeper realisation of the Humanity and Divinity of our Lord has been vouchsafed. It came to us during Holy Mass, during our thanksgiving after Communion, while we were praying before the Blessed Sacrament or during the Procession of a Eucharistic Congress. We remember the moment so well when, with a deeper

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conviction of the truth, we exclaimed : “ My Lord and my God ! ” How many thousands make use of this ejaculatory prayer at the moment of the consecration of the species, or when they make their genuflection to the Divine Host of our tabernacles !—ejaculation to which an indulgence is attached. Those whose early education has been received outside the One Fold and who, in riper years, have entered the Church, know, too, that God has frequently spoken to their souls when they have knelt before the Altar in some Catholic church. The Blessed Sacrament has so often proved to be the star that guides souls to the Church, where they find both “ the Child and His Mother,” Mary.

“ *My Lord and my God.* ” Where shall we find a more comprehensive prayer, so much expressed in five short words ? Jesus is my Lord and Master. He has taken a real human Body. He knows what it is to suffer. He has known what it was to be homeless, hungry, thirsty, and weary. He endured the most excruciating torments in His Sacred Body. He mourned for those who died, He was treated with insults and injuries. In every pang that rends the soul He had His share. He experienced spiritual desolation and also bitter disappointments at the hands of His own. Yes, He has endured all this and more, therefore He can sympathise with me when I grow weary, when I faint by the way, when all earthly resources seem to fail me. Then, more than ever, He is “ my Lord,” my very own, as though He had no other soul besides mine to succour and defend. My Lord ! the Friend that cleaveth closer than a brother ! *My Lord*, who will accompany me through the Valley of the Shadow of death.

“ *My God !* ” He who created me, who ever preserves me. How the saints realised this love of God for each personally ! David—the man after God’s own heart—frequently rejoices in this special love of God for his soul : “ Thou, O Lord, art *my* Protector, *my* Glory, the lifter up of *my* head.”¹ “ Thou, O Lord, art *my* hope.”² “ I will fear

¹ Ps. iii. 3.

² *Ibid.*, xc. 8.

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no evils, for Thou art with *me*.”¹ I am a beggar and poor : the Lord is careful of *me*. The Apostle of the Gentiles had a deep realisation of the special love of Jesus for him. He writes : “ I live in the faith of the Son of God, who loved *me* and delivered Himself for *me*.”² This truth has ever been the anchor and consolation of all the saints, therefore let us cultivate this conviction, this consoling faith and hope in God’s infinite love. We, though spiritually poor and beggars, are nevertheless destined to be His “ priceless possessions ” hereafter, and here below we are the sheep of His flock ; it is not His will that one should perish. In governing the world and co-ordinating all human events, God has in view the higher good of *each* of His children. In spite of our rebellious feelings when trials overtake us, we can make an act of faith in this article of our faith ; we can still look up to Him who made us and to our Divine Redeemer and make our act of resignation, saying with all the energy of our will : “ *My Lord and my God !* ”

“ *My Lord and my God !* ” We love to contemplate this manifestation of Jesus to His unbelieving Apostle. It brings so prominently forward the personal love of Jesus for this *one* rebellious soul. As we think of the Eleven looking with reverence at their Risen Saviour—Thomas kneeling at the feet of Jesus, who stretches out His sacred hands that the Apostle may see and touch them, our thoughts leap forward to that day when “ He cometh with the clouds and every eye shall see Him.”³ Blessed indeed will those be who can then lift up their heads—knowing that their redemption draws near—and say : “ *My Lord and My God !* ”

Did our Lord congratulate St. Thomas as He once did St. Peter, when the latter confessed his Master to be “ the Christ, the Son of the Living God ” ? Did Jesus call St. Thomas blessed because flesh and blood together with preventing grace had revealed this truth unto him ? No. Jesus, having shown His love by granting the proofs for which St. Thomas had asked, proceeded to rebuke him

¹ *Ibid.*, xx. 4.

² Gal. ii. 20.

³ Apoc. i. 7.

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gently for his incredulity : “ Jesus saith to him : Because thou hast seen Me, Thomas, thou hast believed : blessed are they that have not seen and have believed.” Notice that Jesus utters no words of direct reproof ; He contrasts the blessedness of those who believe without asking for the corroboration of sight and touch, with the Apostle’s incredulity. Thomas might have obtained this blessing by the acceptance of his fellow Apostles’ testimony. It is to our advantage that he did not, for his incredulity was the occasion which called forth this beatitude—the last of the latest-written Gospel—which every faithful child of the Church can take home to himself. This beatitude is for those of whom Jesus spoke when, in His prayer for His disciples, He said : “ Not only for them do I pray, but for them also who, through their word, shall believe in Me.”¹

It is the law of the Kingdom of Heaven, of the Church militant, that “ the children of the kingdom ” should “ walk by faith and not by sight,”² and “ Faith is the substance of things to be hoped for, the evidence of things that appear not.” It was “ expedient ” for the Church that Christ, her Head, should return to the Father. Already, some thirty days later, when St. Peter preached his first sermon on the day of Pentecost, there were “ three thousand souls ” who inherited this blessing promised to those who believed on the testimony of the Apostles. A few days after the number of those “ that received the word ” had risen to five thousand, so that the Sanhedrin accused the Apostles of having “ filled ” Jerusalem with their doctrine. Persecution forced the first Christians to leave Palestine, and within twenty-five years after the Resurrection of Jesus there were Christian churches in Asia Minor—at Antioch, Ephesus, Galatia, and Ephesus—and also in Greece and Rome. The Apostles’ testimony was received by all, and through the voice of the teaching Church it has come down to us. / All the children of the Church are blessed because, like our Immaculate Mother,

¹ St. John xvii. 20.

² 2 Cor. v. 7.

³ Heb. xi. 1.

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they have believed the "things that were spoken" to them by the Lord through His accredited ambassadors.

All the Apostles believed *after* they had seen Jesus risen. John alone believed when he saw that the sepulchre was empty. Therefore this beatitude concerning the blessedness of faith was pronounced for the generations to come, and when Jesus uttered these consoling words, He knew each and all who would—until the end of time—accept this blessing—He promulgated this beatitude for *me*, since He is *my* Lord and *my* God.

Thoughts against the dogmas of the Church may arise in our minds, but the most effectual remedy is the simple profession of faith in all the Church proposes to our belief. "*Credo*" is an invulnerable shield; "*Credo*," not because we *understand* but because God has revealed these precious truths; "*Credo*" because we can go to none other for the truth, the Son of God alone has "the words of eternal life"; "*Credo*" because we wish to inherit the beatitude promised to those who believe though they have not seen.

One word in conclusion—Have we never envied those who were privileged to gaze upon the blessed features of Jesus, to touch Him, to hear His Divine words? Yet, it is better otherwise, since God has so ordained. Thousands saw Him and did not believe in His claims. They mocked at the Carpenter of Galilee and questioned His right to teach men. Should we have acted otherwise? Perhaps not, but supposing we did possess Jesus on earth, He would only be in one place and only a favoured few could enjoy His continual Presence, whereas we possess Him all our days in His Church, in the Blessed Sacrament, in His spiritual presence within the temple of the human soul that possesses sanctifying grace. Is He not nearer to us now in all these ways than if He still trod the lanes and fields of Galilee? The moment for sight will come in its time—for some it may be even now at the door, since Death may be close at hand,—but even though we have years yet to pass upon earth, the vision will come in God's own time. Meanwhile we will strive to inherit the beatitude of faith,

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to gaze on things unseen. Since " my Lord and my God " is with me at all times, I can touch and see Him by faith. " I can do all things in Him, who strengtheneth *me*."

SUMMARY FOR MEDITATION

First Prelude.—Contemplate St. Thomas kneeling before our Risen Saviour and exclaiming, " My Lord and my God."

Second Prelude.—Ask to see Jesus by faith, that you may merit the blessing He gives to those who accept the testimony of His ambassadors.

First Point.—St. Thomas' presumption in laying down conditions for God. The Apostle's character, the incidents in which his name occurs in St. John's Gospel. The sad week of waiting and longing for an assurance.

Second Point.—Jesus appears to the Eleven. He reveals to St. Thomas that He knows all that has passed, and invites him to touch the sacred stigmata.

Third Point.—Thomas confessed Christ to be his Lord and his God. Jesus praised those who should in generations to come believe without seeing visible proofs. Jesus is our Lord and God. We must hold fast our confession of faith in Him.

Colloquy.—Adore our Risen Saviour. Pray for a firm, invincible faith, such as will overcome the world. Make an act of contrition for past diffidence or wilful doubts. Beg Jesus to seek you when you wander, as He sought His Apostle. Ask for grace to lean with all your weight upon your Lord and God, to trust Him to the end.

XVIII

JESUS APPEARS TO THE SEVEN DISCIPLES AT THE SEA OF TIBERIAS

THE apparition of Jesus to the Eleven had come to an end. Once more the Master had "vanished out of their sight," leaving them full of peace, faith, love, and hope. St. Thomas was no longer "faithless but believing"; thus the union between the Eleven was once again complete. The Paschal season was now over, and throughout that first day of the week, on which Jesus showed Himself to the Apostles, busy scenes were being enacted in the Valley of Cedron. The pilgrims' tents had to be folded up. Some were busy loading the camels, all were preparing to depart; crowds of Jerusalem Jews went out of the Holy City to take leave of friends and relatives, for the caravan set off at the break of dawn, and all had to be prepared over night. We may presume that our Lord's disciples returned with the Galilean caravan. It was safer and pleasanter than travelling in small companies; moreover, at the various halting-places special arrangements were made for supplying the pilgrims' needs, hence food and shelter for man and beast were more easily procured.

At the first streak of dawn on the day of departure all the Galilean pilgrims assembled in the Valleys of Josaphat and Cedron. The caravan leader gave orders for all to fall into rank; the camels and asses were brought up with their packs; men and women separated into two companies—the children travelling with the latter. When all was ready the leader, on horseback, took up his place at the head of the long file, and amidst the acclamations of those

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who had come to see their friends off, and of the pilgrims themselves, the caravan started on the homeward journey.

The route lay over the broad road which wound up and around the southern shoulder of Mount Olivet, past Bethphage and Bethania. As the pilgrims reached the spot where the road turned, they took their last look at the Temple of God and the Holy City. A little farther on the caravan halted at a fountain—known now as “The Apostles’ Spring”—to procure water, for the wilderness lay before them and they had some miles to travel before finding another fountain. “The road from Bethania to the Jordan Plain winds for three hours down valleys, raking the sides of countless round-topped hills crowded one behind another—the wilderness of Judea. A true wilderness it is—but here no desert—with the sides of the mountain ranges clad with shrubs none bigger than a thyme or sage bush; brown and bare in spring on all the southern faces, but with a slight carpeting of green wherever the sun’s rays have not evaporated all moisture.”¹

The pilgrims halted at Jericho, crossed the fords of Jordan, and then followed the left bank of the river as far as a spot a few miles south of the Sea of Galilee. Here the caravan practically broke up as far as the Galileans were concerned, and the various companies dispersed to their respective homes. The rest divided into two sections, one taking the Roman road to Acco, the seaport, the other heading due north-west to Damascus.

As this caravan journeyed from Jerusalem to Galilee, what unwonted emotions filled the souls of our dear Lord’s Apostles and disciples. We like to think of the two bands—the ministering women and the Virgin mother; the Apostles and other male disciples of Jesus. How much they had to speak about, how much more to think of and ponder over! Such stupendous events had taken place since Jesus trod those roads with them as He came up to Jerusalem to celebrate the Pasch. Jesus had been “Crucified, dead, and buried, and the third day He rose again.”

¹ *Pathways in Palestine*, series ii., by H. B. Tristram.

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They had seen Him alive again ; some once, a few oftener ; and they were looking forward to seeing Him again. Had He not sent His angels to the disciples to tell them that He would go before them into Galilee, that there they should see Him, as indeed He had told them during His lifetime ? On the road to Gethsemani Jesus had said to His Apostles : " After I shall be risen again I will go before you into Galilee." ¹ So this blessed company of Jesus' disciples went on their journey speaking of their Master, thinking of Him, trusting their future to His loving care and guiding hand, their hearts burning within them with love for Him.

Having reached Galilee, some of the Apostles at least remained together, and, as they expected the visit of their Lord, they probably dwelt under the same roof, or at least in the same town or village. Since Peter, Andrew, James, and John were natives of Bethsaida—and we find these three mentioned in the exquisite narrative of the apparition of our Lord to the disciples on the shores of the Lake of Tiberias—we are justified in concluding that the Apostles again dwelt on the north-western side of the lake during their stay in Galilee. Here lay Bethsaida and Capharnaum, both situated on the beautiful Plain of Gennesareth. All the lake district was so familiar to these Apostles. It was in Capharnaum that Jesus had worked some of His greatest miracles—such as would have converted Sodom had they been wrought there.

What were the Apostles doing during the great forty days which intervened between Christ's Resurrection and His Ascension ? They were receiving His instructions concerning the propagation of the Gospel, their Master " appearing to them, and speaking of the kingdom of God." ² These days were a wonderful time of rest and preparation for their great work. Yet Jesus was not *always* with them, nor does He appear to have remained *long* when He deigned to manifest Himself. But one word from Jesus brings with it illuminating power and instantaneously reveals the mightiest truths. He speaks and the eyes of the soul are

¹ St. Matt. xxvi. 32.

² Acts i. 3.

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opened—whereas it was blind, now it sees. As Father Coleridge remarks: “It is well to bear in mind that the work Jesus had to do was marked by immense swiftness, and the Apostles must have had a wonderful gift of co-operating with the illumination and the elevation of heart and mind vouchsafed to them so largely.”¹

These instructions were given in different forms—as discourses and as deeds, which had a symbolic meaning. Again, as far as we know, our Lord generally came unexpectedly to His Apostles, so that during this period we find them now in their Master’s company drinking in sacred truths, now occupied in the simple duties of daily life. The last chapter of St. John’s Gospel—that section which has been termed the epilogue—illustrates this assertion and shows how devotions are interwoven with active work, as indeed it should ever be in the life of the true Christian.

The Apostles were in Galilee, there they were safer than in Jerusalem, there they could prepare themselves for their great work, and for all of the Apostles it was their last prolonged stay in their respective homes or with their friends. But, for the time, their ordinary occupation had been taken from them, they were not preaching the Gospel, and therefore could not live on the alms of their hearers. They had to provide for their daily needs; for Jesus did not will to free them from poverty nor its attendant—lowly toil. The future princes of the Church, the ambassadors of the King of Heaven, worked to supply their daily food. What more natural than that Peter, Andrew, James and John, and also Philip, who were fishermen, should return to their old calling? It would supply their needs, for the fish caught in the lake always found ready purchasers. Moreover, fish was one of the chief articles of food in Palestine. Therefore we read that seven disciples of Jesus went fishing in the Lake of Galilee. St. John alone describes this incident: he tells us that Jesus appeared “to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias” after He had shown Himself twice already to the disciples assembled together in

¹ *Passage of our Lord to the Father*, H. T. Coleridge, S. J.

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Jerusalem. This apparition, like that vouchsafed to the holy women, was in the open air—"at the Sea of Tiberias. Let us fix our thoughts for a moment on the scenery of the Galilean lake—a district of surpassing beauty. We will take up our stand on the shores of the Plain of Gennesareth and look around. The sun is just breaking through the rifts in the mists behind the chain of mountains which border the eastern side of the lake. The Hebrews used to call this lake the Sea of Chinnereth (*i.e.* of the harp), on account of its shape. An eminent geographer and writer thus describes this inland sheet of water :

"The Sea of Galilee is shaped like a pear, with a width at its broadest parts of six and three-quarter miles and a length of twelve and a quarter ; that is, about the length of our own Windermere, but considerably broader, though in the clear air of Palestine it looks somewhat smaller. . . . Nothing can exceed the bright clearness of the water, which it is delightful to watch as it runs in small waves over the shingle. . . . On the western side there is a strip of green along the south shore from Tiberias. . . . Beyond this the hills for three miles, almost to the point where the Jordan leaves the lake, approach to the water's edge. Then comes the well-known recess of the Plain of Gennesaret, about three miles long and about a mile broad at its widest part. Four miles above this—almost to the entrance of the Jordan into the lake—the hills again reach the water's edge." ¹

Look well at the shore which borders the Plain of Gennesareth. A silvery beach of shingle composed of myriads of crushed fresh-water shells forms the shore. Oleanders grow close to the water's edge ; behind stretches the plain with its wealth of wild flowers of the most brilliant colours. In this spring morning they are heavy with dew. The mists rise gradually over the eastern side and we see the miniature plain where the Jordan enters the lake. It extends for about six miles along the eastern coast. Hills skirt the whole lake, but the coast-line is

¹ *The Holy Land and the Bible*, vol. ii. ch. xliv., by Cunningham Geikie.

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wider on the east than on the west. Along the lower part of the former towers the table-land of Bashan, which rises sheer 2000 feet above the lake that lies 655 feet below the level of the Mediterranean.

Owing to this great depth and the surrounding hills, the vegetation and climate are almost tropical. The towns lie on the western side of the lake. From the plain, some five miles below, Tiberias rose in all its splendour, numerous villages nestled here and there, chiefly occupied by the fishermen who plied their boats on the lake. What hallowed memories those towns, villages, and shores recalled. Each spot had been sanctified by His Presence, His sacred feet had trodden those fields, towns, and villages. He had walked upon the waters, and many a time crossed the lake in a fisherman's boat. There, too, He had stilled the tempest and called His first four disciples to become "fishers of men."

Now that we have perhaps some faint idea of the beauty of the surroundings, of the setting of the precious jewel, we will consider some facts of the jewel itself, and see that, whichever surface we look at, a divine light—coming down from the Father of Lights—is reflected for our spiritual enlightenment.

"After this, Jesus showed Himself again to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias, and He showed Himself after this manner. There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas, who is called Didymus, and Nathanael, who was of Cana of Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two others of His disciples. Simon Peter saith to them: "I go a fishing. They say to him: We also come with thee. And they went forth and entered into the ship: and that night they caught nothing. But when morning was come Jesus stood on the shore, yet the disciples knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus therefore said to them: Children, have you any meat? They answer Him: No. He saith to them: Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and you shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes. That disciple therefore whom Jesus

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loved said to Peter : It is the Lord. Simon Peter, when he heard that it was the Lord, girt his coat about him (for he was naked) and cast himself into the sea. But the other disciples came in the ship (for they were not far from the land, but as it were two hundred cubits) dragging the net with fishes. As soon as they came to land, they saw hot coals lying and a fish laid thereon, and bread. Jesus saith to them : Bring hither of the fishes which you have now caught. Simon Peter went up and drew the net to land full of great fishes, one hundred and fifty-three. And although there were so many the net was not broken. Jesus saith to them : Come and dine. And none of them who were at meat durst ask Him : Who art Thou ? knowing that it was the Lord. And Jesus cometh and taketh bread and giveth them, and fish in like manner. This is now the third time that Jesus was manifested to His disciples after He was risen from the dead.”¹

The scene seems to pass before our eyes ; we have the pen picture of an eye-witness. We see the lake in the dim morning light. There are many fishing fleets reflected in those blue waters, but our attention is concentrated on one boat—that which contains seven of our Master’s disciples. They have hired or borrowed that ship, having given up their own more than two years ago, when after the first miraculous draught of fishes “having brought their ships to land, leaving all things they followed Him.”² Simon Peter, ever foremost in action, has invited them to accompany him. “*I go a fishing.*” His companions at once consented. Many a time they have fished together on that lake before they knew Jesus, when some of them were disciples of St. John the Baptist. At least five out of that little group are Apostles, namely Peter, Thomas, James, John and Nathanael, who is generally considered to be the Apostle Bartholomew.³ The other two disciples to

¹ St. John xxi. 1-14.

² St. Luke v. 11.

³ The chief grounds for identifying Nathanael with Bartholomew are as follows :

1. Bartholomew is a patronymic equivalent to “the son of

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whom St. John refers may have been St. Philip and St. Andrew, but we have no fixed tradition on this point. From the incident which follows—the reparation exacted of St. Peter and the conferring of the Primacy upon him, it would seem as though only Apostles were present.

These Galilean fishermen are weary. Through the long hours of the night they have sat in the ship, now rowing, now letting her drift, always on the look-out for a shoal. Perhaps they spoke of that night when Jesus was with them in “the hinder part of the ship sleeping upon a pillow,” and recalled how they had awoken Him and He arose and stilled the tempest. Surely they remember how when, after having “laboured all the night and taken nothing,” He had bidden them launch out into the deep, and their obedience was rewarded by the miraculous draught of fishes.

The hours of toil passed slowly; though they knew it not, Jesus was close by them when the morning was just dawning and the great clouds of mist were rolling away from the hill tops—“*When the morning was come Jesus stood on the shore.*” He willed to reveal Himself rather by His deeds than by His voice and features. St. John says Jesus “shewed,” or better “manifested,” Himself to the seven disciples. He uses the same verb as when he speaks of Jesus manifesting Himself by the Incarnation. St. John Chrysostom remarks on the suitability of the word, since a glorious body cannot be *seen* by men, because it is a spiritual body, and after the Resurrection Jesus was not *seen* of men unless He willed to reveal His Presence. Only those whose eyes He deigned to open could gaze upon Him with their human eyes, precisely in the same way that only those to whom He grants the gift of faith can perceive Thalmi,” and he who bore this name must have had some other. (Cf. Simon Bar-jonas.)

2. All those called to the Apostleship whom St. John mentions in the opening section of his Gospel were friends of Nathanael, and yet the latter received the greatest praise from our Lord, who called him “an Israelite indeed,” in whom there was no guile.

3. St. John never mentions Bartholomew, whereas the Synoptists omit all reference to Nathanael.

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Him in the Blessed Sacrament, and believe firmly in His veiled Presence.

Therefore at first, because the Risen Lord so willed it, "the disciples knew not that it was Jesus." They distinguished a human form, and, if they paid any attention to the fact, probably took Jesus for a fisherman who had come down to the shore early to buy fish or to watch his men return with the catch.

"*Jesus therefore said to them ;*" He spoke first, and as they were but one hundred yards from the shore, His voice could be heard quite distinctly. "Children, have you any meat?" Our translation of the Vulgate does not quite give the true sense of the question, which might better be rendered, "Boys (or lads), have you anything to eat with your bread?" and as fish was the usual food, the word for "relish" was used of fish in general. Still "*the disciples knew not that it was Jesus.*" His voice had not betrayed Him. Neither had the question. It was such as any friend might call out, as he descried the little ship and recognised the fishermen. Therefore the disciples answer briefly "No."

Once again their Master spoke, and this time He gave an order: "*Cast your net on the right side of the ship and you shall find.*" Even now they did not recognise Him. Doubtless they took the kind stranger for a skilled fisherman who had noticed some signs of a coming shoal which had escaped their notice. The Lake of Galilee abounds in fish to this day, and Canon Tristram writes thus concerning its productiveness: "The shoals are amazing. On a bright, cloudless day, when the lake is absolutely glassy, one may often see a patch of water—an acre or two in extent—stippled as if by myriads of raindrops, as though an isolated thunderstorm were descending there, and this agitated surface keeps moving on. One looks up—there is not a cloud in the sky. As we come nearer, we see the disturbance is caused by a shoal of thousands of fish swimming slowly on the surface, so packed that they can scarcely move, and their back fins in serried array above the water

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give the appearance of raindrops.”¹ Knowing, therefore, how suddenly the shoals approached, the disciples prepared to obey the friendly stranger who bade them cast their net on the right side of the ship and promised them success.

So far Jesus was *present* and *unrecognised*, and before we go on to meditate on the second stage of this touching incident—Jesus *present* and *recognised*—let us take home to ourselves some of the many lessons which it teaches us. The Master came to His own and they knew Him not. It was not their fault, but simply His hour had not yet come to unseal their eyes. Should we not learn to wait with patience for the hour appointed by our Lord to reveal Himself to our poor souls? It is permitted to long for spiritual consolation, to desire to know the will of God, to wish to have a keen spiritual insight into the truths of our faith, to long for the manifestation of Jesus at the hour of death. Still, if the longed-for hour be delayed, we must bend submissively to His will. All these graces will come, for “all things have their season and in their time all things pass under heaven . . . a time to weep and a time to laugh, . . . a time to embrace, and a time to be far from embraces.”² What is the devout Catholic’s life but one long “waiting for the manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ”?³

Again, may we not also learn that so often Jesus visits those who are patiently accomplishing daily duties, plodding on at dull, monotonous tasks, and not solely when the faithful are engaged in prayer? After His Resurrection, He appeared to the holy women on their way to the sepulchre, to the disciples of Emmaus as they went “into the country,” to the Apostles when they were “at table,” and when engaged in fishing in the lake. Each time He came unexpectedly, and He manifested Himself to His own. Saints have fallen into ecstasies while performing some simple manual work. We are apt to complain that our daily work is absorbing, that it leaves us little time for prayer;

¹ *Pathways of Palestine* (series ii., p. 325), by H. B. Tristram, D.D.

² Eccles. ii. 1.

³ 1 Cor. i. 7.

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yet, if we perform it *for* our Lord, we also perform it *with* Him. Our daily work is apportioned to us by God, and what higher office can we aspire to than the fulfilment of God's Holy Will? It is recorded that Saint Clare, whose duty once obliged her to miss her daily Mass and Communion, because it was her turn to make the bread for the community, received more graces than any of the nuns who communicated that day, on account of her earnest desire to receive the Holy Eucharist.

The Apostles toiled in vain throughout the night hours, but they persevered in their efforts, and their industry was rewarded. Surely this teaches us that God does sometimes set men to some work of which they will either never see the results here on earth or only reap them after years of toil. But the blessing does come sooner or later, and, meanwhile, we are planting in our own souls, by God's help, the virtues of patience, constancy and endurance. All good teachers strive to imprint in the minds of their pupils certain principles, to make them self-helpful; they do not simply work for some showy results. God is the best of teachers, so He allows us to bungle, to make mistakes, to fail, since blunders and failures have their educative value for those who know how to use them aright, and our Heavenly Father loves His children too well to take all obstacles out of their path, to uphold them each time they slip. Yet all the time He is near, blessing our honest efforts and granting us interior graces, even when He refuses exterior success. Let us learn, therefore, not to work simply for results, for what the world calls success, but for Him who blesseth alike him that soweth and him that reapeth and ever giveth the increase.

SUMMARY FOR MEDITATION

First Prelude.—Fix your thoughts on the Sea of Tiberias. Note the features of the landscape, then contemplate the seven disciples toiling in vain. See Jesus standing on the shore.

Second Prelude.—Ask for grace to be faithful to common-

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place duties, to see our Lord by faith ever near you when you perform them.

First Point.—The Apostles and disciples, men and women, return to Galilee with the great caravan. On the road home all their thoughts and words are concerning their Risen Master. They are on the road to meet Him in Galilee.

Second Point.—The seven disciples go fishing. They toil in vain through the dark hours of night.

Third Point.—Jesus appears on the shore. He questions them, gives a command even, but is unrecognised. We may learn *inter alia* that our Lord does not always will to reveal Himself, and that He often visits those who faithfully accomplish their daily duties, however humble; also that our failures are often willed by God.

Colloquy.—Thank our Risen Saviour for these precious lessons. Pray that you may be quick to recognise Him, and content to labour for and with Him, even when He does not reveal His Presence. Ask that you may never be elated by success, nor discouraged by failures. Pray for those who are toiling apparently in vain, in the cause of the Gospel. Thank Jesus for the numerous proofs of love which He has given you individually.

XIX

THE MIRACULOUS DRAUGHT OF FISHES

THE Apostles had toiled all *that* night—that memorable night—and “caught nothing.” Once before, at least, they had had the same experience, when more than two years earlier, “Peter said to Jesus: Master, we have laboured all the night, and have taken nothing, but at Thy word I will let down the net.”¹ The net was let down and they caught a great number of fishes—great and small—so that the net broke. That was the first miraculous draught of fishes, and now the seven disciples had toiled all night in vain, and were ready to obey the order of a stranger, not knowing that He was Jesus. “*They cast therefore (the net), and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes.*”

“The Sea of Galilee was fished principally by means of the ‘draw net’—or ‘seine’ as we still call it—a large net, leaded and buoyed, which is carried out by a boat, cast, and then drawn in a circle, so as to enclose a great multitude of fish. . . . The net and boat fishing are chiefly practised at night.”²

The disciples’ obedience was rewarded. So far, Jesus was *unrecognised*. He had come *to* and stood *upon* the shore, which was raised some feet higher than the surface of the lake. He stood there and the morning breezes fanned His sacred features, the rising sunbeams fell upon Him as the mists rolled away. He stood watching His disciples, guiding and succouring them, waiting to manifest His Personality after He had shown His power.

¹ St. Luke v. 5.

² *Natural History of the Bible*, H. B. Tristram.

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Sweetly His Voice sounded over the waters: "*Cast your net on the right side of the ship and you shall find.*" At once the disciples proceeded to obey. The casting net was dexterously thrown into the water, and when it was fully stretched out, drawn back again, in a circle, preparatory to raising the contents into the boat. As leader, Simon Peter threw the net, the others helping or looking on intently, watching to see whether the promise, "*You shall find,*" had been realised.

But no sooner did they attempt to raise the net out of the water, than they discovered that it was full of fish, and so heavy that they could not draw it up into the boat. St. John says: "They were not able to draw it for the multitude of the fish."

On seeing this manifest miracle, one at least recognised the work of their Risen Master. In this incident, each of the two prominent Apostles—Peter and John—stands forth with his own peculiar temperament and characteristics. The daylight had increased since Jesus had first shown Himself on the shore, and John of the eagle eye could perhaps more readily discern His Master. But certainly the miracle revealed His Presence. In any case, with that quick intuition and a mind particularly receptive, St. John at once recognised Jesus. He knew Him by His works, though he had failed to recognise our Lord's voice. John the "Seer," the beloved Apostle, "said to Peter: *It is the Lord!*" He did not say *my* Lord nor *our* Lord, but *the* absolute Lord. As a writer has admirably said: "Tried by the ordinary processes of reasoning, the conclusion was precarious. But there is a logic of the soul which deals with questions of the higher life, and St. John trusted it. He recognised the insight, the power, the love which belonged to One alone, and when the truth found utterance, the others acknowledged it."¹

"*It is the Lord.*" How much there is in these few words! In them are expressed all the deepest emotions and acts of the human soul—desire, joy, love, adoration.

¹ *Revelations of the Risen Lord*, F. B. Westcott.

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These words are the counterpart of those of Jesus : “ *It is I, be not afraid.*” Only three times in St. John’s Gospel do we find any sayings of his own recorded. “ It is the Lord ” is the last saying, and the other two likewise concern our Lord.” “ Rabbi, where dwellest Thou,” are the first words he addressed to Jesus. Also it was he who, at the Last Supper, asked Jesus to point out the traitor, saying, “ Lord, who is it ? ”

“ *It is the Lord.*” In that multitude of fishes, an unbeliever might have seen a stroke of good fortune—a pure chance—but the believing disciples saw the Lord’s hand, His direct action in their favour. He was preparing them for that life of faith which was henceforth to be theirs, and that of faithful Christians in the ages to come, for since Jesus ascended into Heaven, “ we walk by faith, not by sight.”

But if John was the first to recognise the Risen Master, the first to point Him out to his companions, Peter, with his usual impulsive energy, was the first to go to Jesus : no sooner had “ *he heard that it was the Lord,*” than he “ *girt his coat about him (for he was naked) and cast himself into the sea.*” We are not told that Peter spoke : his one thought was to reach the shore, to be near Jesus. Therefore Peter, letting go the net, hastily put on his rough fisherman’s coat over the simple under tunic¹ which he wore, girded it up around his waist, lest it should prevent his swimming, and plunged into the waters. We seem to see him, as, drenched to the skin, his countenance beaming with joy, he prostrates himself once more at the feet of Jesus, and, recognising the sacred features of the Master, is absolutely convinced of His identity : Yes, “ *It is the Lord !*” who has kept His promise : “ *I will go before you into Galilee.*”

Meanwhile, the six disciples were occupied with their catch, which they made repeated efforts to draw up into the boat. Finding this impossible on account of the number and size of the fishes, they “ came in the ship (for they were

¹ The Greek word here rendered “ naked ” simply means “ not dressed,” “ bare,” not absolutely “ unclothed.”

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not far from land, but as it were two hundred cubits), dragging the net with the fishes." Note the details, such as only an eye-witness could supply. "You see one skilled in sailing who with his eyes has learned to measure the distance from the coast."¹ The disciples rowed their boat; the net was securely fastened to it, and as they were only about one hundred yards from land, they quickly reached the shore and hurried to greet their Master.

Yet the greeting had changed somewhat from the former times, for in all manifestations of the Risen Saviour we notice that the disciples were more overawed by His Presence than they were before He passed through the portals of Death. They fully realised that "the former things had passed away" never to return under exactly the same conditions. During the three years of their training, they had grasped the truth that their Master was really Man, and only intermittently had they risen to a confession of His Divinity. After the Resurrection, the belief in the Divinity came to them with overwhelming force, and Jesus had to give them numerous proofs of His loving condescension in order, so to say, to put them at their ease with Him.

He had acted thus on this occasion, for "as soon as they came to land, they saw hot coals lying, and a fish laid thereon, and bread." Jesus knew that they had not had any food since the previous evening, and a night's hard work in the cold lake air had given them an appetite, therefore He had acted the part of Host, by preparing them a meal. On the charcoal fire, fish was broiling, and close by they saw bread. Fishermen were accustomed to cook their morning meal thus on the shore, before taking their catch to the market, but our Lord had forestalled His disciples and proved His own words: "I am in the midst of you as one that serveth."²

While the seven disciples stand on the shore, at a respectful distance from Jesus, looking at Him reverently, we glance at the boat from which they have "come down"

¹ Patrizi, *in h.l.*

² St. Luke xxii. 27.

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to land. Probably those boats that skim the lake to-day are precisely of the same type. Therefore we conclude that it is "about twenty-two feet long and seven feet wide, partially decked at the bow and the stern, so that one or two men can easily lie under the deck and sleep in the shade, as the rowers do by turns. The sail is a long lateen, like those of the Mediterranean, and bent on a long bamboo."¹ On the right side of the ship, the water is churned by the efforts of the captive fish to free themselves. The net is partly raised out of the water, and the shimmering light on the variously-coloured fishes gives the whole a kaleidoscopic appearance. Doubtless the net contains fish of the sturgeon, carp, bream and barbel species. Tristram says that he obtained fifteen species when fishing in this lake, "nearly every one absolutely peculiar to it and to the Jordan."

So far, the disciples simply knew that the net contained "a multitude of fishes," but they had not stopped to examine its contents, in their haste to greet our Lord. He who had miraculously provided the catch now sent them to examine it, to bring the net to land. "Jesus saith to them: Bring hither of the fishes which you have now caught." Gladly they obeyed, and Simon Peter at once went up on to the ship and "drew the net to land, full of great fishes, one hundred and fifty-three, and although there were so many, the net was not broken."

Although Simon Peter took the initiative, the others helped. They drew the net to land, and soon the moving mass of living fishes lay glistening on the silvery beach. How eagerly they counted them and proclaimed the total number! How they commented on the contents being all "*great fishes*"; on the net not being broken! And they knew that they owed this to the Lord, who was even now with them, whom they now had all to themselves. When St. John penned this exquisite narration, some sixty years after the event, the whole scene must have been so vividly present to him, and he rejoiced to be able to write it down

¹ *Pathways of Palestine.*

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for the instruction of those who were not so privileged as he and his six companions on that memorable morning.

Having landed their catch, the disciples brought some to land, glad to offer Him the fruit of their labours, to render to Him His own gift, they told Him, too, how the net had withstood the strain, how, under ordinary circumstances, it would surely have been rent. Then "Jesus saith to them: Come and dine." A better translation would be "Come and breakfast" (*ἀριστον*, not *δείπνον*).

This was their first meal, and Jesus had prepared it for them. They seem again to have been overpowered by loving awe. They knew it was He, but He had not said: "It is I, fear ye not." His deeds had manifested Him to be the Lord. In response to His invitation, therefore, they gathered round the charcoal fire, and, much as they longed for an explicit verbal assurance as to His identity, "none of them that sat at meat durst ask Him: Who art Thou? knowing that it was the Lord." St. Augustine (*in h.l.*) remarks: "So great was the evidence of the truth that Jesus was appearing to them, that none of the seven disciples dared to doubt or deny it, though they ventured not to question Him." Faith, love, and gratitude filled their souls—"the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord." Their reverence was no barrier to their happiness.

Then, as He had so often done before, Jesus served His disciples; "Jesus cometh" close up to them and to the fire, "taketh bread and giveth them, and fish in like manner." The words in the original refer to *the* fish and *the* bread which they had seen prepared. There is no reason to infer that they ate of the fish which they had taken. The meal appears to have been eaten in silence—no conversation is recorded. The unwonted appearance of Jesus' sacred Risen Body overawed them; the light of His Divinity dazzled their souls. They ate in silence the breakfast He had provided for them, they contemplated His sacred Person, and He read in their souls the faith, love, and gratitude which they were so powerless to express.

St. John concludes the narrative of this apparition with

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these words : " This is now the third time that Jesus was manifested to His disciples, after He was risen from the dead." The words " was manifested " mean more than simply " allowed Himself to be seen " ; they give us to understand that Jesus made a special revelation and taught His disciples some special truth. During the " Great Forty Days," Jesus taught His Apostles by His words and also by His actions, and in this second miraculous draught of fishes and all the attendant circumstances, commentators from the earliest times have seen not only a *miracle* but, like the cursing of the fig-tree, a *parable in action*. They contrast the second miraculous draught of fishes with the first, and gather thereby precious lessons concerning the kingdom of God.

We will consider each detail in turn. The boat on both occasions was under St. Peter's direction, but at the first miraculous draught of fishes, Peter had launched " out into the deep " in obedience to Christ's command ; the second time the ship was quite close to the shore. Multitudes of fishes were enclosed both times, but whereas at the first miracle, these fishes were of all sizes, at the second they were all large. The first time, the net broke and the ships were " almost sinking " ; the second time, the net was towed safely to land ; moreover, the net withstood the strain. After the first miracle, the toilers were called to be fishers of men (literally, " to catch men alive "), after the second, they were invited to go ashore and rest with their Lord. Also, whereas previously Simon Peter " fell down at Jesus' knees, saying : Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord," after the second miracle he plunged into the water to go to His Risen Lord. Finally, at the first miracle, Jesus was in the boat, at the second He stood on the shore and thence gave His command.

Now we will consider the truths of which these varying details are symbolical. The second miraculous draught of fishes represents the final gathering in of the net of the Church on to the shores of eternity, where Jesus Himself stands to welcome His own. The net holds all, there is

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no rent in it, and all within that net are safely brought to the shore. The fishers of men present the fruit of their toil to their Master, and He invites them to eat at His table. The net of the Church is no longer rent, torn with schisms, containing good and bad fish, living and dead. All the fish are alive, swimming in to land as the net is drawn by the ship; all the fish are *great* because the elect are equal to the angels of God. Seven fishermen took that second draught of fishes, and "seven" is the number of the Sabbath day—the number that signifies rest, perfection, completion. Also the net was drawn in when it was but one hundred yards from land—not, as previously, floating in the deep—in the "many waters" upon which "the great harlot"—*i.e.* the world—sitteth, and which represent all "peoples and nations and tongues."¹ As long as time lasts "the kingdom of heaven is like to a net cast into the sea, and gathering together of all kinds of fishes," but when God's *fiat* goes forth: "Time shall be no more," then the bad shall be cast forth and the good gathered into the net, then shall "the Angels go out and shall separate the wicked from among the just."² The welcome invitation will be heard: "Come ye blessed of my Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."³ Then shall they indeed be blessed, because they are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb."⁴

"All these differences show the contrast between a ministry of trial, with Jesus suffering, and a ministry of triumph, with Jesus glorified. The number of fishes, too, has its meaning. Most writers see in the number 153 the symbol of the entire number of the elect: their explanations of the details differ. Some think that *one hundred* signifies the elect of the Gentiles, *fifty*, the elect of the Jews; and *three*, faith hope and charity, through which all are saved (Greek interpreters). Others see in the number *one hundred* a representation of the souls saved in the common life of the world, in the number *fifty*,

¹ Apoc. xvii. 15.

³ *Ibid.*, xxv. 34.

² St. Matt. xiii.

⁴ Apoc. xix. 9.

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the elect ones who lead a life of perfection in the world, while *three* symbolises those who lead a life of perfection according to the religious vows of poverty, chastity and obedience.”¹

How many precious lessons we may gather from this second miraculous draught of fishes! We will enumerate a few, leaving the reader to meditate on the others at his leisure.

1. *Success crowns obedience.*—The disciples cast their nets when and where Jesus bade them, and their obedience was rewarded. All efforts made in a wrong direction lead to no results; those who work thus, toil all night and take nothing, whereas those who obey our Lord’s commands are sure of success sooner or later in His time, for which all must wait patiently. We may apparently have years of fruitless toil, when we endeavour to overcome some fault, to obtain a particular virtue, to bring back a wanderer to the Fold. But what matters it if God grants our petition in the end, as He will, provided we labour with full confidence in His promises? God’s views of success are often quite different from ours; we know not how He is co-ordinating all things for His greater glory and our salvation. Therefore we must be content to work on in the right way, knowing that, in His time, He will grant abundantly all, and more than all, we desire. For all who work for God, the Divine promise is given: “My elect shall not labour in vain. . . . The work of their hands shall be of long continuance”²—as long as the days of eternity.

2. We should learn to see the action of God in all that happens, in all that surrounds us. He is working in Nature, ministering to His creatures, providing for their needs. The food we eat is as much the product of His work as that which He miraculously supplied His disciples with when they came to the shore. “It is the Lord” should be the cry of our souls whatever blessings He grants, whatever petition or coveted favour He denies, whatever treasure He takes back.

¹ *Life of Jesus Christ*, A. J. Maas, S.J., *in h.l.*

² Isa. lxx. 23.

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It is the Lord who gives and takes—"let Him do as pleaseth Him best."

How can we attain to this disposition of soul? By purity, for the pure "shall see God." St. John, the Virgin Apostle, was the first to recognise Jesus, and our Master ever reveals Himself to "the pure of heart." To purity, we must join love. Love will discover Him everywhere, it pierces His disguises, those "other shapes" which baffle cold scrutiny. Love is quick to catch the voice, to recognise the footfall of a friend. To the saint who loves God, every incident in life bears writ large upon it: "It is the Lord." If the Holy Ghost deigns to enkindle the sacred fire of love upon the altar of our souls, then in that celestial light we shall be able to pierce the mists which conceal our Risen Saviour, to know Him ourselves, to reveal Him to our brethren. "It is the Lord." Yes, we kneel in His Presence before the Tabernacle, we receive Him into our souls. One day the veil will be removed, in that day He will call us to Himself, and when the vision of our Risen Master is granted at last to our longing souls, then in the rapture of our souls shall we exclaim: "It is the Lord."

3. Finally, let us have full confidence in the ultimate victory of the Church. She may be tempest-tossed on the ocean of the world, but never will she be engulfed in the depths. Nations may persecute and exile her children, but, like the first disciples of Christ, they disperse "through the countries," and the good seed is sown in other lands. If European nations close their doors to the ministers of the Gospel, Japan and China welcome them. The Church *must prevail*, since Jesus will be with her all her days. To those who command in the bark of Peter, the words of the Angel to St. Paul may be addressed. "God hath given thee all them that sail with thee."¹ Looking back from our heavenly country upon our life here below, we shall be able to bear witness that, in spite of all the tempests stirred up by the devil, the world, and the flesh, "it has come to pass that every soul got safe to land,"² to that

¹ Acts xxvii. 24.

² *Ibid.*, 44.

The Miraculous Draught of Fishes

“ new earth ” reserved for the children of the Church, when “ the first earth ” shall be gone, and the sea shall be no more.”¹

SUMMARY FOR MEDITATION

First Prelude.—Contemplate the seven disciples as, in obedience to our Lord’s invitation, they breakfast on the shores of the Lake. Jesus Himself serves them.

Second Prelude.—Ask for grace to recognise our Lord and to obey His commands.

First Point.—St. John is the first to recognise Christ Peter the first to go to Him. The disciples row their boat to land. They gather round our Lord. He has prepared a meal for them.

Second Point.—Jesus invites them to breakfast ; He bids them bring Him some of the fishes. The net contains one hundred and fifty-three large fishes. Jesus serves His disciples.

Third Point.—This miracle has a symbolical meaning. We may learn that success crowns obedience, that God our Creator is ever serving us, that the Church of Christ can never fail. She will outride all earth’s storms, and reach the haven of eternity.

Colloquy.—Thank Jesus for these precious lessons. Ask Him to imprint them upon your soul. Pray for courage to work while it is day. Ask that you may, in all that happens, be able to say : “ It is the Lord.” Pray for an increase of purity and charity. Ask that those who are persecuted for Christ’s sake may be strengthened. Beg that God may grant you the gift of final perseverance. Invoke Mary, the Star of the Sea.

¹ Apoc. xxi. 1.

XX

THE PRIMACY CONFERRED UPON ST. PETER

THE sun had risen above the Table-land of Bashan and flooded the Sea of Tiberias with its light before the seven disciples had finished that morning meal prepared for them by the loving-kindness and omnipotence of their Risen Master. The glorious sunrise tinted with exquisite shades the snowy heights of Hermon, which, like some mighty guardian, rises in majesty on the northern side. "Birds of bright plumage frequent the shores, and over the waters of the lake many a sea-fowl dip the wing. Visitors tell us how—as night gives place to morning—the sudden note of a lark will ring out, silvery and joyous, as if from the very midst of the stars, waking a concert all along the shore and back to the hills. The sunrise and sunset tints, opal and purple, are wonderful; and so are the contrasts of light and deep shadow." According to the Rabbins, "God loved that sea beyond all others"; Christians love it too, for all the sacred memories which its various names arouses in their souls.

Now the bright light of the rising sun falls upon the little group of disciples and our Risen Saviour as they breakfast on the shores of the Plain of Gennesareth. The fishes still lay in the net, and this miraculous draught was a fitting prelude to the memorable scene which was to follow—to the solemn conferring, or rather confirmation of the Primacy on Simon Peter. We will endeavour to contemplate this beautiful incident in spirit, to fix our attention wholly on our Lord, that seeing His actions and hearing His words, we may be spiritually nourished. We will also

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fix our gaze awhile upon Simon Peter and John, the beloved disciple, for in this incident only these two disciples come to the fore—the five others appear to have been silent spectators.

So far we have no record of the disciples' having spoken, except St. John who, when still in the ship, said to Peter: "It is the Lord." Jesus had addressed them several times and given two commands. Now He spoke again, and this time He required a formal answer from Simon—not simply an act of obedience. St. John alone records this charge to St. Peter, his intimate friend and companion in labour.

"When, therefore, they had dined (*sc.* "breakfasted") Jesus saith to Simon Peter: Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me more than these?" It was thus that our Lord had addressed him when, for the first time, Simon had stood before Him: "Thou art Simon, the son of Jona, thou shalt be called Cephas, which is interpreted Peter."¹ That was a grand moment in Simon's life in which the later definite call was anticipated. "Simon" signifies one who "hears" or "obeys," and Simon Peter had acted up to his name when, in obedience to our Lord's call, he had "left all" and followed Jesus. Though Jesus had changed Simon's name to Peter, yet He invariably addressed him as "Simon." When Peter had confessed Jesus to be the Son of the living God, our Lord addressed him as "Simon Bar-Jona"; so, too, He spoke when predicting the denial: "Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat," and when about to confirm Simon Peter in his position as Head of the Church, the Risen Saviour uses the old familiar name. Doubtless the words "son of John" recalled to St. Peter his first call, and the blessing which Jesus had uttered after Peter's sublime confession of faith in the Divinity of his Master.

The Good Shepherd knows His sheep *by name*; He knows and loves each individually as man longs to be known and loved. He Himself has chosen for each of His

¹ St. John i. 42.

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elect, as for Peter, that "new name written, which no man knoweth but he that receiveth it."¹ To each, our Saviour can say: "I am the Lord who call thee by thy name."² How well He knew the inmost soul of Simon, son of John, when He put to him in presence of the others that searching question: "Lovest thou Me more than these?" Nathanael, "the Israelite without guile," loved Jesus dearly, John was the beloved disciple, Thomas and James were faithful followers, and Simon is asked whether he loves his Lord "more than these" others.

It is interesting to note that, in the original Greek as in the Latin Vulgate, two verbs are used to express love in the brief conversation between Jesus and the Prince of the Apostles. The one used by our Lord the first and second time He questioned Peter, signifies a love based on esteem, an affection founded on the conviction that the one loved is in every way worthy of love (*ἀγαπῶ*, diligo). St. Peter, in his three answers, uses the word which expresses the warmth of human passion (*φιλέω*, amo). Father Hull, S.J., in his "Essay on Love,"³ admirably explains and contrasts these two loves. He summarises as follows: "Spirit-love is therefore of its essence a pure volition, calm, deliberate, and passionless. Sense-love on the contrary is essentially passionate in nature, though in its milder forms it does not amount to passion. As a matter of fact, on account of our composite nature the two kinds of love work together, and blend into one stream of vital force. Midway between the two comes *emotion*, which is defined as a sympathetic vibration of the sense-faculty in response to the activity of the spirit, and results in feeling or affection, and makes our spiritual acts thoroughly human."

In His third question Jesus takes up Peter's word: Since we are human beings He would have us love Him with *all* our soul, with our whole heart, with both spirit and sense-love. Peter answered at once: "Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee"; he does not add

¹ Apoc. ii. 17.

² Isa. xlv. 3.

³ *Love and Marriage*, by Fr. Hull, S.J.

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“more than these.” Before Jesus had suffered, Peter was ready enough to proclaim his superiority over his fellows, to declare that, even though they *all* should desert our Lord, yet he was ready to go with Him to prison and to death. Jesus knew that Simon loved Him “*more than these,*” but He willed a triple confession as a reparation for a triple denial. Simon had denied Jesus publicly, the reparation was therefore fittingly public. Our Lord knew, too, that Simon was no hypocrite. He had not declared Himself ready to go to prison and to death merely to curry favour with his Master. When Simon said he was ready to suffer for Jesus he honestly thought himself prepared to do so, and indeed the other Apostles shared his sentiments, for in St. Matthew’s Gospel we read that, when Peter had made his spontaneous vehement protestation of fidelity: “Yea, though I should die with Thee, I will not deny Thee, *in like manner said all the disciples.*”¹ To none did St. Peter’s fall come with so great a surprise as to Peter himself.

Again, Simon wisely refrained from adding “*more than these,*” because his fall had taught him not to judge others. He could reply modestly concerning his actual dispositions; he would not and could not penetrate into the hearts of others. His bitter experience had shown that the former confession of fidelity was premature, and that if the others had made a like confession they had not failed so completely as he had: they forsook Jesus, he both forsook and denied Him. In the deepest humility and penitence, Simon would have considered his brethren surpassed him in love.

Note, too, how Simon appealed to the knowledge of Jesus, though the fact that he loves is the experience of his inner consciousness. He appealed to the Risen Saviour, who knew him far better than Simon knew himself, and who had revealed that knowledge so tenderly and powerfully when, immediately after the Apostle had denied his master, “*the Lord, turning, looked on Peter.*” Jesus was even now looking at him when He put that solemn question. Simon did not quail beneath that look, humbly he looked

¹ St. Matt. xxvi. 35.

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at Him when he answered : “ Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee.”

Simon has made his first confession of love for Christ, and our Lord at once replies : “ Feed My Lambs.” Simon not only retains the Apostolic office, but Jesus even confirms him in his charge of his brethren. Simon is now converted, and the first committed to his care when the Primacy is bestowed upon him are the lambs of the Fold : those who are weak and spiritually unable to rule, govern, and defend themselves. By the Lambs of the Fold of Christ commentators understand the laity, those who look to the shepherds for food and shelter. Jesus the Good Shepherd loves the lambs of His Fold, therefore He confides them to the one who loves Him more than all others. The rulers and bishops of the Church militant portion out to the lambs their “ supersubstantial bread ”—the truths revealed by God to the Church and the means of grace.

Our Lord had not only fully pardoned Peter but raised him to the greatest dignity in the Church, of which one of the most important duties is to feed the lambs of that “ little flock ” to which it is the Father’s good pleasure to give the kingdom of heaven. Peter’s greater love qualified him for this sublime office, for the true shepherd has to be prepared to follow in the footsteps of the great “ Shepherd and Bishop ” of souls by laying down his life for the sheep. Yet these lambs and sheep are still *Christ’s* ; He does not give up the ownership of the flock : “ For thus saith the Lord God : Behold I Myself will seek My sheep and will visit them . . . I will feed them in the most fruitful pastures . . . there shall they rest on the green grass . . . I will seek that which was lost and that which was driven away, and I will bring again, I will bind up that which was broken, and I will strengthen that which was weak . . . I will save My flock.”¹

Simon Peter knew the Scriptures, he had heard, too, the beautiful parable of the Good Shepherd, moreover, as Jesus bade him feed the lambs, a divine light, a

¹ Ezech. xxxiv. *passim*.

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special opening of the eyes of the soul revealed to him the full significance of the Risen Saviour's words. Simon, who had been called to "take men alive" (as the original Greek reads), understood by the changed metaphor—from that of the fisherman to the shepherd—that as shepherd he was to rule and guard the flock of his Master. Perhaps the inspired words recurred to him in all their glorious fulness of meaning: "You, My flocks, the flocks of My pasture are men, and I am the Lord your God." The Good Shepherd had laid down His life for His sheep, for those whom Simon Peter was called to tend.

Jesus "saith to him again: Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me?" Once more, the penitent Apostle reiterates his humble confession: "Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee." Again the solemn charge is given: "Shepherd My sheep." The sheep represent the bishops and other pastors of the flock, and the expression "shepherd" the sheep signifies the power of the Prince of the Apostles—vested in him and his successors, the Popes of the Catholic Church—to govern the whole flock of Christ.

Jesus here realises His promise of building His Church on Peter, as on a rock; to him He gives the power of the keys, the authority to bind and loose, to absolve and to retain men's sins, to legislate for the flock, and to punish evildoers, to open the door to admit catechumens, and to expel notorious sinners. This Divine power and authority extends to all ranks, all places, all times—it is universal in its comprehensiveness.

Once more Jesus questions his delegate: "He said to him a third time: Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me?" This time our Lord catches up Simon's word for love, the word which signifies a strong emotional feeling (*Φιλείς με, amas*). But "*Peter was grieved*, because He had said to him the third time: Lovest thou Me?" We seem to see the pained, sad expression pass over Peter's face. The threefold repetition of the question, and even the coal fire around which the disciples were sitting remind the Apostle of his triple denial.

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How delicately Jesus asks reparation—a triple confession of love for a triple act of cowardice! The Risen Saviour did not rebuke Simon publicly for his sin; He did not deprive him of his Apostolic dignity, for “the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.”¹ Each confession of love is, on the contrary, the foundation of a greater dignity, a greater proof of the confidence of Jesus in Simon; now converted and formally installed as the supporter of his weaker brethren. “*Peter was grieved,*” yet he accepted the humiliation willingly, even gladly, for a truly penitent soul ever longs to atone for past infidelities and takes humiliations as her just due.

“*Peter was grieved,*” perhaps he began to doubt his own sincerity, to wonder whether the threefold confession concealed a veiled prediction that he would fall again. Or perhaps he thought that Jesus distrusted him. Therefore, being grieved and not daring to assert his love “more vehemently,” as in days gone by, he would have done so promptly, Simon appealed once more and most emphatically to our dear Lord’s twofold knowledge, to His experimental knowledge of Peter’s past life, and to His omniscience. “Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee.”

The words imply a confession of the Divinity, for God alone searches the depths of the human soul. The blood mounted to Peter’s face as he looked at Jesus and ardently uttered this third confession, which expressed so much humility and consciousness of honesty of purpose and word. If Simon had failed in his supreme hour of trial, it was not because his love for Jesus was a mere fleeting sentiment, or a spurious imitation: no, it was genuine love, but weak. Simon was passing through a phase in the Christian life common to all the faithful, one which St. Paul experienced and which he expresses in these words, which ring like a knight’s challenge: “When I am weak, then am I powerful. Gladly then will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may dwell in me.”² Peter *fell* when he

¹ Rom. xi. 29.

² 2 Cor. xii. 9.

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thought himself strong ; he *stood* when he realised his weakness and trusted in the power of the most High.

Peter said : “ Lord, Thou knowest *all* things.” How glad he was to be able to appeal to Christ’s intimate knowledge of his past life and present dispositions ! How much Jesus knew of Peter’s attachment to His Sacred Person ! Simon Peter had so promptly obeyed the call to become a fisher of men ; he had walked upon the waters to go to his loved Master ; he had served Him faithfully until that fatal hour of weakness, when Satan accomplished his desire to sift Simon as wheat ; and that denial was immediately followed by the most sincere repentance, “ going out ” from the scene of his fall, Simon had “ wept bitterly.”

Jesus knew the present dispositions of His Apostle. He read in Simon’s soul a sincere desire to repair his fall, a true deep love for his Master, and burning zeal for the cause of the Gospel and the well-being of the sheep of the Fold. Looking forward, the Risen Saviour saw, too, how Simon’s career ever after would be a lifelong atonement for his denial and an unequivocal proof to the world and the Church—here represented by the six disciples who sat around—of the sincerity of that triple confession of devoted attachment to the service of his Master.

Simon has thus appealed to our Lord’s omniscience, and again confessed his love for Him. Once more the solemn injunction falls from our blessed Lord’s lips : “ Feed My sheep.” Not only are the lambs to be fed, but the shepherd must likewise provide spiritual food for the sheep. The triple confession has been made, the triple atonement accepted. As St. Augustine so beautifully says : “ For the thrice denying, there is rendered a thrice confessing, that the tongue be not less servant unto love than it had been unto fear, and also lest the imminence of death should have elicited more of speech than life now present.”¹ The whole flock is now confided to Peter, his authority extends over all the Fold of the Good Shepherd, over the teaching Church, represented by the “ sheep,”

¹ Hom. cxxiii. § 3.

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over the hearing Church—the priests and laity—represented by the “lamb” (or as in some manuscripts, “the lambkins”).

This power and authority confided to the supreme Pontiff is also Divine in its operation and significance for the whole Church, whose being, attributes, stability, life, growth, and work stand and fall with the Primacy of Peter, a Primacy not simply of honour but of Divine appointment and jurisdiction. Peter is the Vicar of Christ, not of any earthly potentate. Nothing short of the Divine origin of the Church can explain her universal sway over men's souls. She encloses within her fold men of all nations, of all classes of society, of cultured mentality and of untutored minds. She adapts herself to all and supplies the needs of all. The little child learns his catechism and believes the doctrine of the Holy Eucharist, the deep scholar accepts this same revealed truth, though never can he fathom its depths. The Church is the One Fold, “the one ark of salvation for all.”

Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift of a universal, infallible Church, of a Pontiff who represents Christ to us on earth and governs in His dear Name. St. Peter, in his second Epistles, written at Rome about fifteen years after our Lord's Ascension, reveals to us how he understood his grand mission, how he deemed it should be fulfilled. Addressing those in charge of the various Christian Churches in Asia Minor, he writes thus: “Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking care of it not by constraint, but willingly according to God, not for filthy lucre's sake, but voluntarily . . . being made a pattern of the flock from the heart.” Then, because the ministry entails grave responsibilities and many hardships, the Apostle goes on to encourage those who fulfil this arduous office by bidding them look to the end: “And when the Prince of pastors shall appear, you shall receive a never-fading crown of glory.”¹

When Jesus conferred the Primacy on St. Peter He

¹ 1 Pet. v. 2.

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looked down the ages and provided for the spiritual needs of every human being who should ever be created. Each individual—the poorest tramp or beggar child—profits as much by the Church as though She existed only for that one soul, just as each benefits by the sun's rays, as though they fell on no other human creature. Do we value our title of "lambs" of the Fold? Are we docile to our shepherds? If the latter have grave duties so have the former. All faithful Catholics by their docility and obedience, by their fidelity and loyalty, can do so much to lighten the burden of those in charge of their souls.

Not only is it our duty to obey the commandments of the Church, to live up to our Faith, but we must also submit our intellect to the teaching of the Roman Pontiff. We must train ourselves to "think" with the Church, and to abstain from criticising the actions of those who rule us spiritually lest we be guilty of the folly and absurdity of rejecting that Infallible Authority appointed by the Prince of Pastors and substituting for it our fallible judgment, ignorance, and consummate impertinence. When the moment comes for us to leave this world, we hope to *die* as faithful children of the Church, this title will then be a greater consolation than any pre-eminence which we may have obtained by our wealth, heroism, or learning. Be it ours then to *live* as faithful children of our Holy Mother, the Catholic Church, glad to be simple lambs of the Fold of Christ, dear to the Good Shepherd, known to Him by name.

Another lesson which we may learn from this beautiful incident of the apparition of the Risen Saviour to His disciples on the shore of the Sea of Tiberias is that a deeper love of God and our neighbour is the truest reparation which we can make for past sins. Peter had sinned grievously; he had sinned in spite of vehement protestations of fidelity, and he had sinned in presence of his Master's foes. But Peter's repentance was as deep as his sin had been great, and he longed with all his soul to make some reparation to the Lord whom he had denied. That dis-

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position was the fruit of the work of grace in Peter, and He who gave that intense longing had prepared an outlet for it—Peter should make a threefold protestation of love and afterwards prove that love to be sincere by his devotedness to the lambs and sheep of the Fold, and later by laying down his life for the Gospel.

The fact of the existence of certain severe Religious Orders, such as the Trappists, bears witness to this desire of sinners to repair the past ; while some pure victims enter such monasteries to atone for the sins of others, not a few find there a refuge where they can expiate some grievous sins of their past lives, and all faithful Catholics know, in some measure, how after any special fault there follows a keen desire to make some atonement to God. How can this desire—a precious gift of God—be realised ? As Simon Peter realised his longing to redeem the past, by increased love and zeal for the Risen Saviour.

Suppose our Lord put the question to us, prefixing our name : “ Lovest thou Me ? ” what would be our reply ? If we look at our past profession and deeds there is a painful contrast. We cannot but confess our numerous shortcomings and inconsistencies. This experience makes us diffident and, in the normal course of action, self-diffidence is the foundation of our confidence in God ; seeing that we are so weak, so prone to lapse from the path of virtue, we lean upon Him, who is strong to save all who invoke His aid. True humility never despairs, knowing that God upholds His weak, erring creatures and clothes them with His might. It is a mere counterfeit of humility which utters the desponding cry : “ I shall never keep my resolutions. It is no use trying.”

Looking at the present, in spite of previous falls, we can bear testimony that our one earnest desire is to serve God faithfully. We are enabled by the grace of God to answer the Master's question. We can reply like Simon Peter : “ *Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee.* ” “ *Lord, Thou knowest all things.* ” No detail of our past lives is hidden from Him. He knows how

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bravely we have striven on certain occasions, even though we were ultimately conquered. He knows, too, how at other times, like Peter, we have capitulated to the enemy without striking a single blow. He knows all the circumstances of our early education and environment which have so largely contributed to make us what we are to-day. He knows when our intentions have been pure and when there have been mixed and lower motives.

“*Lord, Thou knowest all things.*” Therefore He knows our present dispositions, that we have the longing to believe, to hope, to love, which prompted the centurion’s cry: “Lord, I believe, help Thou my unbelief.” Jesus sees all our potentialities for good or evil. He knows also what the future holds in reserve, and therefore we can approach Him with confidence and tell Him that as far as we dare answer for ourselves we, who have so often denied Him, yet presume to say: “Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee!”

Will He accept our feeble profession? Yes, He of whom it is written: “The bruised reed He shall not break, and smoking flax He shall not extinguish, till He send forth judgment unto victory,”¹ will accept our imperfect service and lead us in His appointed hour “unto victory.” He will do more, He will entrust us with some work for Him, some apostleship of love or suffering, and perchance both. Even as the Risen Saviour gave to St. Peter the charge of shepherding the sheep, so He gives to each Christian soul, in a limited sense, some sheep or lambkins to tend for Him. There is a very wide field in the Church for the work of the laity; earnest Catholics are needed to help in the various social works which are established under episcopal sanction. They can visit the sick, instruct converts, teach the catechism to children, clothe the poor, and what are these occupations but so many forms of tending Christ’s sheep and lambs? To parents God confides, in a very special manner, the care of the lambs, and blessed indeed are those mothers and fathers who rise to their high calling.

¹ St. Matt. xii. 20.

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“Feed My lambs.” *His lambs, not ours.* His to give or take back as He pleases, and those He places within that Eternal Fold of which the door only opens to admit the sheep and lambs, never to let them go forth; those are better off, since the Good Shepherd leadeth them Himself beside the still waters and into the green pastures.

“*Feed My lambs.*” We have but to look around to find them. Some are sickly, others are straying from the Fold, and it is our blessed privilege to tend the former, to lead back the latter. While we strive thus to work for the Prince of Pastors, we prove our love for Him, and though simple laymen, yet, when “He shall appear” we, too, “shall receive a never-fading crown of glory.” Thus we shall prove our love to be no mere ineffective sentiment, but that charity which springs from the conviction that God alone merits the first place in the affection of His creatures, who are to be loved for and in Him. “Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee.” “O Almighty and merciful God, grant that our service of Thy Divine Majesty may ever be that of a devoted will and a sincere heart.”¹

SUMMARY FOR MEDITATION

First Prelude.—Contemplate Jesus and His disciples sitting around the coal fire on the shore of the Lake.

Second Prelude.—Ask that, like St. Peter, you may prove your repentance and love “in deed and in truth.”

First Point.—Jesus questions Simon concerning his love for Him, and confides the lambs to his care. Again, Jesus questions Simon and entrusts the sheep to him. Love may be an intimate conviction of a person’s merits, a principle of devoted actions, but, alas! sometimes a mere sentiment may pass muster for it.

Second Point.—Jesus asks Peter for a third confession of love. Peter, though grieved, confesses his love for his Master, and is raised to the position of the visible head of his brethren and of the Church militant.

¹ Collect for the Sunday within the Octave of the Ascension.

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Third Point.—The Church is established for us. We must be docile sheep, obedient to those in authority. By zeal and charity we can repair past offences.

Colloquy.—Adore your Risen Saviour. Tell Him that you do love Him, that you wish to be wholly His. Ask pardon for past infidelities, for acts of cowardice, for broken faith. Offer yourself to help the Prince of Pastors. Beg Him to point out to you *where* and *how* you may help to tend the lambs and sheep of the Fold. Pray for the Pope and bishops of the Catholic Church, for all who have the care of souls. Pray for those who are straying from the fold. Ask for the grace of final perseverance. Thank Jesus for having called you into the Church, for deigning to accept your humble, imperfect services.

XXI

JESUS PREDICTS ST. PETER'S MARTYRDOM

WE have seen how Jesus asked St. Peter for a three-fold confession of love as a reparation for his triple denial, and afterwards confirmed him in his office as the visible Head of the Church, the representant upon earth of Jesus the invisible, true Head of the Church. In spirit we will still linger upon the shores of the Lake and meditate on the solemn words of Jesus, by which He announced to St. Peter that the honour of martyrdom was reserved for him in his old age. The Apostle was to receive as a reward for his fidelity, the privilege of suffering for his Divine Master and enduring the same death—that of the Cross.

We can picture the seven disciples standing now grouped around Jesus. Peter faces his Lord, John stands close by Jesus in his accustomed place. The other disciples are all looking intently at the Risen Saviour, perhaps dreading each moment that He will, as previously, vanish from their sight; all are awed by our Lord's solemn majestic demeanour, and from His manner they realise that He is about to utter some weighty truth. Yes, weighty indeed, nothing less than the raising of the veil of the future and allowing one of His Apostles to look to the end of his life on earth; to learn *how* and *when* that life must end. What would be our feelings if an angel sent by God bade us prepare to see our future life open out before us? Should we dare look beyond? Tense expectation fills these souls, reverence and awe are revealed by their features, and a mysterious supernatural thrill quickens the pulses of Simon's heart

Jesus Predicts St. Peter's Martyrdom

as the Infallible Truth, the Omniscient Son of God foretells the future reserved for the first Head of the Church militant.

Our Lord commences His discourse by the solemn asseveration, which was ever the prelude to some important statement or revelation, and then follows the prediction : " Amen, amen, I say to thee : when thou wast younger, thou didst gird thyself and didst walk where thou wouldst. But when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands and another shall gird thee and lead thee whither thou wouldst not. And this He said signifying by what death he should glorify God."

Simon was to live to a ripe old age and then to glorify God by laying down his life for the Gospel ; this was revealed to him by the Eternal Truth : *Amen, amen, I say unto you.*" In later years St. Peter wrote : " The laying away of my tabernacle is at hand, according as our Lord Jesus Christ also hath signified to me."¹ It needs a strong soul to face such a revelation, to wait for its fulfilment. Holy Simon made known to Mary, the Mother of Jesus and of the Church, when her Divine Child was but forty days old, *i.e.* thirty-three long years before the prediction was realised, that a sword of sorrow should pierce her soul. To St. Peter, the Prince of the Apostles, it was revealed about thirty-five years² before it came to pass that he should indeed accomplish his promise of dying for his Master. Both these were strong souls indeed, capable of bearing the burden of such knowledge.

We will now examine our Lord's words clause by clause, that we may gather some precious spiritual fruit for our own needy souls. " *When thou wast younger, thou didst gird thyself.*" According to an ancient tradition Peter was a middle-aged man when Jesus ascended into heaven, whereas St. John was comparatively young. We have no tradition concerning the ages of the rest of the Apostles. It seems probable that, with the exception of St. John, all were in the prime of manhood. Simon Peter stands out as the type

¹ 2 Pet. i. 15.

² It is generally accepted that St. Peter died *circa* A.D. 67 or 68.

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of a man of an ardent, impulsive nature, in contrast to St. John, who is taken as representing the contemplative life. All we know of Simon Peter proves him to have been a man of action—a born leader of men. As such we can well realise how, in his youth and riper manhood, he “girded” himself; how he loved his liberty, how instinctively he took the initiative in any enterprise. When he was younger—in contrast to that day of his old age to which Jesus referred—then he girded himself. He needed no help to gather up his flowing abba or tunic into his girdle when he set to his work or prepared to travel. He had but a brief hour ago girded his fisher’s coat around himself that he might swim unimpeded to Jesus.

But it would not be always thus, and Peter learns that he is to live to old age, and, further, the blessed assurance is given him that he will persevere to the end. Thou “*didst walk where thou wouldst.*” Already Simon Peter had sacrificed his liberty by obeying the first call to follow our Lord. For three years Simon had thrown in his lot with the great Prophet of Galilee. Proud of being His disciple and deeply attached to Jesus, Simon had travelled about in His company announcing the kingdom of God. Already, in a certain sense, Peter had given up his liberty; he was a willing captive in the service of Jesus. Still, the Apostle had walked *where he would* in so doing. He voluntarily obeyed the call to follow Christ; it required no effort to remain with Him, to serve Him, to obey His commands. Of all those blessed three years of ministry Simon Peter could truthfully say: “Lord, it is good for us to be here with Thee, doing Thy work, learning from Thy lips.” It was not always to be thus; Peter was to be led where naturally he would shrink from going.

Solemnly Jesus continued His predictions, none presuming to break the tense silence of expectation and awe. “*But when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee and lead thee whither thou wouldst not.*” Our Lord chooses the symbol of old age when man, dependent upon his fellows, and—unable even to gird up

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his coat—stretches out his arms that another may perform this humble service for him. “And this Jesus said, signifying by what death Simon Peter should glorify God.”

Peter, like his Master, was to be crucified. The position of the outstretched arms of one whom another is girding is that of a man on the cross. Peter was girded by another when he was fastened to his cross. According to an ancient tradition, St. Peter was crucified outside the walls of Rome on the same day that St. Paul was led out there to execution. The Church keeps the feast of both these Apostles on the twenty-ninth of June. Eusebius briefly records the labours of St. Peter after our Lord's Ascension, and the fulfilment of Jesus' predictions concerning that Apostle's death. This historian writes: “Peter appears to have preached through Pontus, Galatia, Bithynia, Cappadocia, and Asia to the Jews that were scattered abroad; who also, finally coming to Rome, was crucified with his head downward, having requested of himself to suffer in this way,”¹ *i.e.* in the opposite position to which Jesus was crucified, St. Peter deeming himself unworthy to suffer in exactly the same position as his Divine Master. Did the Prince of the Apostles understand the true significance of the metaphor of being girded and led whither he would not wish to go? Did he pierce the veil of the figure and see behind the word “Crucifixion” writ large? We know not; the words of Jesus do not actually specify this cruel death, and St. John may have given the explanation of his Master's words in the light of its fulfilment, for John wrote his Gospel more than twenty years after St. Peter's martyrdom. Tertullian also (*circa* 220) bears witness to St. Peter's being crucified² at Rome, and this tradition has never been questioned by the Church.

Certainly the words of Jesus pointed to bonds and imprisonment—to suffering for the Gospel. Peter was to be *led* in an advanced old age whither he would not naturally turn his steps. Suffering is always contrary and repugnant to our nature, above all, death arouses an intense

¹ *Eccles. His.*, Bk. III, ch. i.

² *In Scorp.*, § 15.

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recoil, for death did not originally enter into God's plan of creation. Man was destined to immortality, both of soul and body. Moreover, death is that phase of our existence of which we have no experience whatever and therefore no preparation, humanly speaking, for the rending apart of soul and body. We do experience small and great sufferings: the former pave the way for the latter, but there is no such slow preparation for the separation which death exacts, no *partial* rending asunder of soul and body. Death comes but once and is final as far as this life is concerned. There is no rehearsing for death. Try as we will to forestall that solemn moment by reflecting on the certainty of death, and on the deathbeds which we have witnessed, still we cannot realise that the separation *must come for us individually*; practically, we still think all men mortal except ourselves, as one of our great poets has truly said.

Certainly after Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit brought to the remembrance of the Apostles all that Jesus had ever taught them, they must all have expected to die a violent death, for when our Lord sent out His twelve Apostles to evangelize during His lifetime on earth, He told them plainly what awaited them. If the solemn warnings He gave them were not understood at the time, yet, after He had endured the Cross, despising the shame, and had sat down at the right hand of God, after the Holy Ghost had called all His words back to their remembrance, and when the persecutions arose in Jerusalem—never to cease, indeed, as long as time lasts—then the Apostles could have had no doubt as to their end; they all knew that in some form or another martyrdom awaited them at the end of life's highway, at the close of "the royal road of the cross." Often they must have pondered over the solemn words of Jesus: "Beware of men, for they will deliver you up in councils and . . . scourge you in their synagogues. You shall be brought before kings and governors for My sake . . . You shall be hated of all men for My Name's sake. Fear you not them that kill the body and are not able to kill the soul.

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I came not to send peace but the sword. He that taketh not up his cross, and followeth Me, is not worthy of *Me*. He that shall lose his life for Me shall find it." ¹

None of these solemn predictions were realised during the Apostles' first mission; on the contrary, they returned full of peace and "told Him all they had done," ² they record no persecution or opposition. These were to come in the future, as Jesus reminded them again at the Last Supper, when He said: "The hour cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doth a service to God." ³ And Jesus added: "These things I have told you, that when the hour shall come, you may remember that I told you of them."

Hence it is manifest that when our Lord foretold the martyrdom of St. Peter He simply corroborated what He had previously told all the Twelve, but with greater details of time and manner. Simon Peter knew that he would be privileged to die for his Divine Master, and in spite of all natural feelings of repugnance, he could speak calmly of it as a "mere laying aside" of his earthly tabernacle, a folding up of the tent in which his soul had sojourned. And thus history records that "Peter who, in presumptuous haste, had promised to die for Christ, at last did die for Him in perfect love. It was needful, however, that Christ should die first for the salvation of Peter, before Peter could die for the Gospel of Christ." ⁴

The Good Shepherd giveth His life for the flock, and those He chooses to take His place upon earth must be prepared to do likewise. All the Apostles shed their blood for Christ, except St. John, who was miraculously preserved when immersed in a cauldron of boiling oil. St. James the Great—who heard Christ's prediction to St. Peter and to whom no special prediction appears to have been granted—was the first to give his life for the Gospel. St. John outlived all the rest and died a natural death.

St. Peter and likewise St. Andrew, his brother, went

¹ St. Matt. x. *passim*.

² St. Luke ix. 10.

³ St. John xvi. 2.

⁴ St. Aug. Hom. cxxiii.

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to the cross. When the hour came to suffer, St. Peter, trusting in the strength of his Master, was ready to "glorify God." It is a beautiful thought that the death of the faithful servant is spoken of not as a trial or a humiliation, a penalty, but as a deed that glorifies God. St. Peter by his crucifixion confessed his Master's Divinity, for who would die for a man long since dead? He confessed, likewise, Jesus' veracity and omniscience, since his own death realised the predictions uttered by his Master; likewise St. Peter's death revealed the genuineness of his love for Christ, for "greater love than this hath no man, that a man lay down his life for his friend," and our Lord has said, "I have called you friends." For Jesus—Simon's Friend, He who cleaveth closer than a brother—the faithful Apostle gladly laid down his life. The beautiful tradition is well known concerning St. Peter's death. Urged by the entreaties of the faithful, who pleaded the need of his living for the sake of the Church, St. Peter had consented to take refuge in flight. As he passed along the Appian Way, he met his Lord, bearing a heavy cross. "Whither goest Thou, Lord?" he asked. "To Rome, to be crucified again," Jesus replied. Then the Apostle understood that his hour had come, that he must stretch forth his hands to the cross, and be girded to it by his executioners, and that for him on the morrow there would be "a going to the kingdom"—that Christ would suffer again in his faithful servant: and St. Peter turned back, ready to glorify God by the cross, that thus he might go to his Risen Lord and abide with Him for ever.

From that cross Peter's spirit passed to the embrace of his Master, who had stood by him while he agonised, and there, without the walls of Rome in the place of execution, the Prince of the Apostles was welcomed to his eternal home by the Shepherd and Bishop of the Fold, whose sheep and lambs he had so faithfully tended and for whom he had shed his blood. Once more—and this time for him alone—St. Peter heard the voice of Jesus: "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

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Truly " things are not what they seem " : contrast the two scenes : the blood-stained cross bearing the dead body of St. Peter, the deep grief of the Christians, the fiendish joy of the Roman executioners, and near by a headless human trunk leaning against a blood-stained block ; the head lies in a basket of sand. The sight makes one shudder ! What a tremendous mystery is human pain ! Yes, but look up for a solution to this enigma. See the Son of God welcoming the home-coming of His faithful shepherds ; look how the Queen of Heaven greets them ; listen to the acclamations of the angelic choirs ! The kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence and the violent take it by force, and for those who have thus striven there is laid up an eternal reward in that Home, where sorrow and weeping will be unknown. This vision solves the enigma of life's anguish and problems.

But we have wandered from the shores of the Lake, where Jesus still stands, surrounded by His faithful disciples. We see Him prepare to go forward, and He invites St. Peter to follow Him : " When He had said this," *i.e.* after He had foretold Simon's martyrdom, " He saith to him : Follow Me." When at the Last Supper " Simon Peter saith to Him : Lord, whither goest Thou ? " Jesus answered : " Whither I go thou canst not follow Me now, but thou shalt follow hereafter." ¹ We see Jesus walking along the shore : it is another parable in action. Even as Simon trod in his Lord's footsteps on that spring morning, so he was to follow Jesus in the appointed hour up the slope of Calvary. All the Apostles were called to follow their Master, but in thus singling out Peter, Jesus was realising His promise, " Thou shalt follow hereafter," and opening the mind of His Apostle to grasp the full significance. For Peter had the highest office and was therefore bound to follow our Lord more closely than all the rest. It was his office to lead the sheep and the shepherds ; to be first in facing dangers, for in the hierarchy of the Church the higher office involves greater love, courage, and fidelity, and those who are privileged to consecrate themselves

¹ St. John xiii. 36.

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wholly to the service of God have to bear a heavier cross than those of the "rank and file." The brunt of the combat falls on the leaders.

To St. Peter Jesus confided His Church ; to St. John He confided His Mother. Both these Apostles (and also St. James) had received special favours from Jesus, but St. Peter held a higher office in the Church, hence he was called to imitate his Master more closely, to bear heavier responsibilities, to be crucified like his Lord.

"When thou wast younger thou didst gird thyself, and didst walk where thou wouldst." In a certain sense these words apply to all whose days of earthly pilgrimage are declining. The aged can all look back to a time of comparative independence when, full of life and energy, they made and executed plans of all kinds. Their aims were high and they were prepared to carry all before them to attain to their desired end. Youth is the time of vigour, of hopes, of enthusiasm. God wills it should be so. Youth must learn by its own experience, and each man has his work to do, a different work according to his age. Youth, too, has its illusions, its reverses, its joys and sorrows these go to make up the composite sum of human experience. Years pass, and old age comes in its turn, and then for some follow years of dependence, of physical infirmities, of loneliness.

The words of our Lord can be applied to the aged ; they stretch out their hands, and another girds them ; they are often led whither they would not willingly go. Circumstances over which they have no control shape their lives and furnish them daily with occasions of self-sacrifice. It is hard for poor human nature to hold on, to endure, especially when so many unexpected sources of suffering open out, still it all comes in accordance with God's will. If the aged are thus being led along the royal road of the cross, it is that they may follow Him who trod it Himself before He asked them to toil painfully along that thorny way.

To some, as to St. Peter, a revelation is granted, and as far as anything can be certain on earth they may see clearly

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that poverty awaits them—they have been unable to provide for their old age. Others know that they are the prey of some incurable disease. It is leading them where they would not ; very often *the one* road of all others along which a Christian dreads to travel is *the one* along which Providence guides him. Yet it happens thus by the will of God : “ It is the Lord.” The crosses which press so heavily upon the aged—bereavements, infirmities, and loneliness—are the means of detaching them from earth. The lower inclinations may revolt, but to those who can grasp the grand truth that the slow process of death, which we call old age, with all its humiliations, glorifies God, the road homeward loses its terrors. The faithful Christian walks gladly thereon, because it leads to the city of God. The Good Shepherd is ever beside His own, upholding them by His strength and answering the earnest cry of their souls : “ Abide with us, O Lord, because it is towards evening and the day is far spent.”

Let us continue our contemplation ; our Lord has yet something to say to Peter. The Evangelist, and eye-witness of this apparition, is interested in the incident which follows. He writes : “ Peter, turning round, saw that disciple whom Jesus loved following, who also leaned on his breast at supper and said : Lord, who is he that shall betray Thee ? Him therefore when Peter had seen, he saith to Jesus : Lord, and what shall this man do ? ” (more literally : “ Lord—and this man—what ? ”)

St. John's intimacy with our Lord and with St. Peter justified his approaching them nearer than the rest. Peter, James, and John were privileged beyond the other Apostles on various occasions. These three were allowed to be witnesses of the raising of Jairus' daughter, of the Transfiguration of their Lord, of His Agony in Gethsemani. Peter and John were together on Good Friday morning in the palace of the high priest, they went to the sepulchre on Easter morning, and we find John as Peter's companion when the former announced his intention of fishing and tacitly invited the disciples to accompany him. Both

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were natives of Bethsaida ; they had known each other in youth, and the common call to the Apostleship, their deep love for Jesus, had cemented this friendship. Often these friends had talked over their hopes and aspirations, especially since their Lord had appeared to them after His Resurrection. Their grand mission and tremendous responsibilities were gradually opening out before them, and St. Peter has just been told what awaits him ahead—old age and martyrdom. But John, what of him? Had not Jesus once promised that John should drink of his Lord's chalice? Peter understood now that to drink of that chalice signified that John should suffer in some way, but how? Was John also to be girded and led whither he would not? When the Master's predictions were fulfilled for Peter, would John be at the side of his old and tried friend.

We can understand the question; it gives such a human touch to the incident. Friendship, brotherly love and interest, and perchance a certain curiosity prompted the question. St. Peter's character is so vividly and clearly portrayed, he is ever so human, so true to himself. The striking contrasts in the two Apostles did but serve to strengthen their friendship. They had been so united in life, were they to be separated in death?

St. John Chrysostom writes: "John is silent, but Peter speaks, for he greatly loved John, as is clear from what followed, and their close union is shown through the whole Gospel as well as in the Acts. . . . Wherefore Peter, desiring also that John should share with him, said: 'Lord what of this man? Shall he not come the same way with us?' Just as previously, not being able to question Christ himself, he puts John forward, so now, desiring to make him a return and supposing that he would desire to ask about matters pertaining to himself, Peter undertook the questioning."¹

But it was not our Lord's will to draw aside the veil for John as He had done for Peter, and He replied: "So I

¹ Hom. 88.

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will have him remain till I come, what is it to thee? Follow thou Me." The original reads: "*If I will that he remain, &c.*" Our Lord's reply has greatly puzzled commentators, as it puzzled the early Christians who heard of it, and St. John refers to the interpretation which they put upon our Lord's words while he himself was still living. "This saying therefore went abroad among the brethren, that this disciple should not die. And Jesus did not say to him: he shall not die, but: So I will have him remain till I come, what is it to thee?"

The words "till I come" are the most ambiguous in our Lord's reply. Some explain this "coming" of the Lord as referring to the fall of Jerusalem, which John lived to see, and after which, by the rapid spread of the Gospel, there was, as it were, a coming of the Lord in power. Other writers refer the words to our Lord's coming to John at the hour of death; others again understand that our Lord spoke purely hypothetically, as though He had said: "Suppose I will that he should live till I come to judge the world, what is that to thee?" Thus Jesus taught His Apostle and all His disciples not to scrutinise the dealings of God with our neighbours, but to leave their future in God's hands. There are many obscure passages in the Scriptures, and this is one of them.

In the primitive Church, especially among the Thessalonian converts, there was a strong belief in the proximity of the Second Advent of Christ. The chief object of St. Paul's second Epistle to the Thessalonians was to assure them that the day of the Lord was not so near at hand as some, seized by terror or misled by the spirit of error, would have them believe it to be. He warned them also not to accept as genuine every document put forward as having been sent by him, and tells them that the day of judgment will not come "Unless there be a revolt first, and the man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition." This prevalent belief accounts for the saying that "went abroad among the brethren" that John should not die until Christ came to judge the world. The beloved disciple states clearly

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that this opinion was erroneous ; he repeats the words of his Master, but does not explain them. St. John died in the third year of the Emperor Trajan, at the advanced age of about one hundred.

However obscure the first part of our Lord's reply to St. Peter may be, the second clause is perfectly clear : " Follow thou Me." The words are most emphatic, as though Jesus had said to St. Peter : " Whatever happens to John or to others, look thou to thyself and follow Me." St. Peter understood and obeyed our Lord's command, following his Master faithfully even to the cross.

" *Follow thou Me.*" Jesus addresses these words to each of His disciples as well as to St. Peter, for all are called to work and suffer for Him. Yet so often Christians neglect the manifest duty of following Christ, because they cannot unravel the workings of Divine Providence. Terrible accidents happen, the innocent are engulfed with the guilty, and because men cannot reconcile these events with God's love, mercy, and justice, they revolt and cast off the yoke of His commandments. To such we may address the words of God to His servant Job : " Wilt thou make void My judgment, and condemn Me, that thou mayst be justified ? " God will be His own interpreter in the end, but we do well to remember when these temptations to distrust God arise in our souls that the *finite* mind of man can never compass the *Infinite Wisdom* of God.

SUMMARY FOR MEDITATION

First Prelude.—Contemplate our Lord, as, surrounded by His disciples, He foretells Peter's martyrdom.

Second Prelude.—Pray for the grace to be faithful unto death, by the exact performance of daily duties.

First Point.—Jesus predicts St. Peter's martyrdom. Suffering and death are always opposed to nature. Old age has its special trials.

Second Point.—St. Peter questions Jesus concerning St. John. Our Lord replies by an obscure hypothesis. We must

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trust God with regard to all obscure questions, content to follow Him faithfully.

Colloquy.—Thank our Lord for these great lessons. Accept your life and death as God has fore-ordained it. Ask for grace to suffer for Christ, to follow Him in spite of repugnances. Pray for the aged, that they may sanctify their infirmities. Intercede for those who are in face of some lifelong affliction. Pray, too, for those who question God's dealings with His creatures.

XXII

CHRIST'S COMMISSION TO HIS APOSTLES

(I)

BETWEEN the Apparition of our Lord to the seven disciples on the shores of the Sea of Tiberias and the third Apparition to the Eleven, we must place two others: that granted to the Eleven and to more than five hundred disciples in Galilee and the manifestation to St. James the Less—also surnamed “the Just.” Both these are mentioned only by St. Paul, who writes: “Then was He seen by more than five hundred brethren at once; of whom many remain until this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that He was seen of James.”¹

St. Matthew probably alludes to the manifestation of our Lord in Galilee, spoken of by St. Paul, when the former writes: “The Eleven disciples went into Galilee, unto the mountain where Jesus had appointed them.”² The presence of the Eleven does not exclude the five hundred disciples. Possibly Apostles—now reduced to Eleven by the death of Judas—were charged to assemble Christ’s Galilean disciples. He willed that not only the privileged Eleven and the ministering women should see Him alive again, but also more than five hundred, each of whom, in his own sphere of influence, would be also a witness to the Resurrection. If there were Twelve formally *accredited* witnesses to the fact of the Resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, there were also others to whom, “by many proofs,” “He showed Himself alive again after His Passion.” These disciples did their part in propagating the news of our Lord’s Resurrection, and we can realise with what venera-

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 6.

² St. Matt. xxviii. 16.

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tion they must have been regarded by those who had not been so privileged. When some had "fallen asleep," those who remained were still more honoured, just as we are proud to have still among us some of the Crimean veterans—men who took an active part in the stirring events of those days, who knew and fought bravely under the great leaders in that war.

The manifestation in Galilee on the mountain "which Jesus had appointed" appears to have been the only one of which both the *time* and *place* were designated by our Lord. The name of the mountain is not given. A local tradition gives the Horns of Hattin, which stands between the Plain of Gennesareth and Tiberias, the mountain to which the "Sermon on the Mount" is assigned by some commentators. It would seem fitting that, where the laws of the Kingdom of Heaven had been set forth, there the Conqueror of Death and Hell should show Himself alive again before ascending to the Father.

The Risen Saviour appeared on the mountain in Galilee to the Eleven and to the numerous disciples who were waiting there for His promised visit. We feel sure that the ministering women were there and also St. Matthias, who was shortly to be elected in place of Judas. Of that multitude some had already seen their Risen Lord; for others it was to be the first manifestation, and they waited with bated breath and speechless awe, for they were there by appointment to meet the One who had risen from the grave by His own power; the One whom many of them had seen hanging upon the Cross on Good Friday. He had come back to life—so His Apostles said—and they were waiting for Him to manifest Himself.

Lo, there He stands: they did not see Him approach. Can it be really He? Is it not an illusion? These were the misgivings of those who doubted. There was something so unearthly about His appearance that these disciples could not believe it was really He Himself. But if "some doubted," the rest, including the Eleven, "seeing Him, adored."

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We have no further details ; it suffices that we know Jesus manifested Himself so publicly in that province of Palestine where His work had been most successful, and that faith in His Divinity was gradually increasing. " Seeing Him, they adored " ; we will join our act of worship with theirs and say to our Risen Lord : "*Laudamus Te, benedicimus Te, adoramus Te, glorificamus Te, Gratias agimus Tibi propter magnam gloriam Tuam.*"

No Evangelist mentions the apparition of our Lord to St. James the Just, afterwards Bishop of Jerusalem, but the fact is certain, since we have the authority of St. Paul for it. The Apostle of the Gentiles probably heard it from the lips of St. James himself, whom he saw in Jerusalem several times. It is evident that *all* the apparitions of our Lord are not recorded by the Evangelists, since St. Luke speaks of these manifestations as having been spread over the whole of the forty days between the Resurrection and the Ascension.

The third *recorded* apparition to the Eleven is generally supposed to have taken place in the Cenacle in Jerusalem just before the Ascension. In order to give the sequence of events, commentators have harmonised the four different accounts of the Synoptists and the Acts of the Apostles. St. John has no reference to this manifestation ; knowing it to have been recorded in the other Gospels, he omitted it in his own.

The harmonised narrative runs thus : " At length He appeared to the Eleven as they were at table ; and He upbraided them with their incredulity and hardness of heart, because they did not believe them who had seen Him after He was risen again. And Jesus, coming, spoke to them, saying : All power is given to Me in heaven and in earth. Go ye into the whole world and teach all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you ; and, behold, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world. He that

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believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be condemned." ¹

Once more the Eleven were at table in the Cenacle, dear to them by so many sacred memories. The "Great Forty Days" were closing in. Our Saviour's words were about to be fulfilled: "A little while and now you shall not see Me . . . because I go to the Father." ² So it came to pass that, "at length," Jesus again appeared to them even as He had suddenly manifested Himself to them on Easter Sunday. By this time the Eleven firmly believed in our Lord's Resurrection—not one doubted. But it had not been thus at the commencement of the life of our Risen Lord. Then "they believed not," in spite of the testimony of the holy women, of the two disciples of Emmaus, nor would St. Thomas accept the testimony of all the other Apostles. Jesus had treated their unbelief very gently, He did not upbraid even Thomas, but now that their faith was strong enough to bear His reproach, He acted as He had ever done during their time of training, and reproved them for their faults—"for their incredulity and hardness of heart."

He vindicated His chosen messengers, for we are not told that He upbraided the Eleven because when He manifested Himself, "they being troubled and affrighted, supposed that they saw a spirit," ³ but because they had not believed "*them who had seen Him after He was risen again.*" Whence we learn that God is jealous of His ambassadors' honour; that He would have us pay the same respect to their words as to His, since He has said: "He that heareth you heareth Me, and he that despiseth you despiseth Me." Certainly our Lord's rebuke increased the Apostles' contrition for their want of faith and also their humility. It was thus that Jesus prepared them for the solemn charge He was about to give them. Already St. Peter had been raised to the Primacy, now the great charge

¹ St. Matt. xxviii. 18-20; St. Mark xvi. 14-16.

² St. John xvi. 16.

³ St. Luke xxiv. 37.

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of promulgating the Gospel was given to the whole Apostolic College.

Never had such majestic words been uttered by any monarch however powerful: "*All power is given to Me in Heaven and in earth.*" Whether these words were uttered in the Cenacle or on Mount Olivet just before Jesus ascended—as some commentators think—their import is the same. "All power is given—literally *was* given (ἐδόθη)—to Him as the Son of man, as the reward of His Incarnation, Passion, and Death. It was not *conferred* upon Him as the Son of God, for in virtue of His Divinity He had the supreme right to reign together with the Father and the Holy Ghost.

David prophesied as though he had heard the Father addressing the Son, saying to Him: "Ask of Me, and I will give Thee the Gentiles for Thy inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for Thy possessions."¹ Isaias also foresaw the dominion of the Lord's Christ when he wrote: "A son is given to us and the government is upon His shoulder, and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, God the Mighty, the Father of the world to come, the Prince of Peace."² To Daniel there was granted a "vision of the night," which he thus records: "Lo, One like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and He came even to the Ancient of days, and they presented Him before Him. And He gave Him power and glory and a kingdom: and all peoples, tribes, and tongues shall serve Him: His power is an everlasting power. . . . His kingdom shall not be destroyed."³

Centuries passed away, the morning of the New Dispensation dawned: David, Isaias, and Daniel had long gone to their rest when Gabriel, God's ambassador to the lowly Virgin of Nazareth, predicted to her that her Son should be great, that His kingdom should have no end. Thirty years later and the Baptist, fulfilling his sublime mission, was setting forth the grandeurs of the Messias, telling men how the Father loved the Son and had given

¹ Ps. ii. 8.

² Isa. ix. 6.

³ Dan. vii. 13.

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all things into His hands. At last the Son Himself came, and throughout His public life He continually referred to the power and authority which the Father had given Him as the Son of man. Speaking to the Jews in the Temple, Jesus said: "The Father . . . hath given Him power to do judgment, because He is the Son of man."¹ Addressing His Father, in that wondrous prayer of intercession for His disciples, Jesus said: "Thou hast given Him power over all flesh." What inspired kings, priests, and prophets had testified, what He had Himself so often taught, Jesus reiterated solemnly when He appeared to the Eleven before confiding to them the superhuman task of evangelising the whole world.

Think what their mission meant! How could a few poor, illiterate men, mostly fishermen, ever take such a command seriously except it had been given by One who could say: "*All power* is given to Me in Heaven and in earth"? The Apostles were so sure of the validity of their mission, precisely because it was conferred upon them by One who spoke with authority. The intrepid courage of the Apostles, the success of their labours, and the continued existence of the Catholic Church in all ages is a proof of the Divine power and authority which founded and ever maintains her, in spite of the most violent opposition and persecutions on the part of monarchs and nations.

The Risen Saviour, as it were, having presented His credentials, in virtue of which He claims men's allegiance, then proceeded to unfold before His Apostles' eyes the details of their grand work. All were to be shepherds of the flock; all were to catch men alive in the Gospel net. "*Go ye into the whole world and preach the Gospel to every creature.*" What a stupendous charge!—they were to go into the *whole* known world—to Jews and Gentiles, to civilised and uncivilised, and to preach the Gospel to *every creature*. They were no longer to confine their labours "to the lost sheep of the house of Israel," no longer forbidden to enter the cities of the Samaritans. The time had

¹ St. John v. 27.

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come to make known the glad tidings, since the Redeemer had accomplished His self-imposed work of redemption. They were to go in His Name, as His representatives holding a Divine Commission.

“All power is given to Me in Heaven and in earth.” We are the disciples of Him who alone could utter these words truthfully, and notwithstanding how often we yield to cowardice and despondency. We speak as though the Lord’s arm were shortened, as though men were, after all, stronger than God. When things seem to go wrong, it is by His permissive Will: He has not abdicated His throne. Human malice *seems*—but only *seems*—to prevail, for the Galilean must conquer in the end, as Julian, the Apostate, was forced to confess, as all God’s enemies will ultimately acknowledge. Therefore, when we are face to face with obstacles, either in the world or in our own souls, we ought to go boldly forward, since “All power in Heaven and in earth” has been given to our Leader, who alone is Invincible.

“Go ye into all the world.” How many thousands are obeying this command to-day in all parts of our earth! The work of making disciples of men is ever being carried on, openly when possible, secretly when necessary. The hierarchy have the special charge of spreading the Faith, but this glorious privilege is not solely reserved for the priesthood. All Catholics can evangelise by word and deed in that little spot of our earth’s surface where God has placed them. The Faith is spread by holy lives, as well as by the diffusion of Catechisms of Christian Doctrine. Pure literature—even fiction—may help on the kingdom of God. A good picture may teach a lesson which will lead souls to the foot of the Cross.

Having taught all nations, Christ’s ministers are charged to baptize them into the Name of the Father, *and* of the Son, *and* of the Holy Ghost. This does not simply mean that men were to be baptized by invoking the Name of the Trinity, nor simply with the sanction of the Blessed Trinity, but it includes bringing them into communion with all who believe in and profess obedience to the august Trinity.

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Hence all Christians, in virtue of their baptism, are pledged to profess their belief in the Three Persons in One God. By baptism they become members of Christ's mystical Body—the Catholic Church—and are bound to obey Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church, and His Vicar on earth, the Pope. Baptism is no empty form, it is a passage from death to life, and this spiritual life is manifested by deeds. The baptized are under the obligation of observing "all things whatsoever" Christ taught His disciple orally. Only a living faith, proved by docility to the commandments of God and of the Church, will avail unto salvation.

Having laid the awful responsibility of teaching every creature upon the Apostles, Jesus consoled them by the blessed assurance of His abiding Presence: "I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world." The history of the Church in all ages bears witness to the abiding Presence of our Lord with and in His Church. Yes, He is really with her, guiding her into all truth, present in those who govern, present in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, present in the souls of all who are united to Him by grace. Here we have another great encouragement to do manfully: He to whom all power is given is with the Church all her days, with each faithful disciple. This is the secret of the marvellous supernatural vitality of the Church. Her Risen Lord abides with her. This also explains why the Faith is all-in-all to every true Catholic, since he does not give his adhesion to some human system but to the living voice of the Church, which is none other than that of her Divine Lord and Saviour.

"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Not only are all Catholics bound to keep God's commandments, to observe all things whatsoever Jesus laid upon His first disciples, but they must also believe the truths revealed by God to the Church of which the Apostles were the foundation stones. Those truths taught to them are handed down to men by the teaching of the Infallible Church, and it is incumbent upon all to accept her teaching. No good works are meritorious unless they are the expression of a

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living faith. Yet men tell us that, provided we lead good moral lives, it matters little, or not at all, what we believe. Such is not the teaching of the Risen Saviour, for He links the eternal salvation of men with their faith in His doctrine: "He that believeth not shall be condemned." Consequently men are not free to reject any article of faith revealed by God. Man's act of faith in God's words is a testimony to the Creator's veracity. Human beings cannot be free to believe what they choose, to accept simply what appeals to them as credible and to reject whatever does not seem probable, since the very base of faith is God's veracity and not the fact that a given doctrine appears reasonable to the human intelligence. Mere human opinion—which those without the Church dignify by the name of faith—is as far removed from true supernatural faith, which accepts God's word for a thing, as earth is from Heaven.

"He that believeth not shall be condemned." These words apply only to those who wilfully reject the truth, not to those who have never heard the message of Christ's ambassadors. Men can be saved without baptism, for faith and contrition can supply its place when baptism cannot be had, but nothing can be substituted for faith. The condemnation uttered by our Lord falls upon those who knowingly and wilfully reject the light of life, upon those who "love darkness rather than light," upon the culpably ignorant.

In our twentieth century there has been a great revolt against the so-called "damnatory clauses" of the Athanasian Creed. Certain non-Catholics object to the subjoined solemn denunciation: "Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholic faith. Which faith, except everyone do keep entire and inviolate, without doubt, he shall perish everlastingly." But compare these passages of our ancient creed with the Risen Saviour's solemn charge: "He that believeth not shall be condemned." Hence it is clear that those who profess to accept Christianity must accept the Athanasian

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Creed, which is but a paraphrase of our Lord's own words. These clauses, which have aroused so much opposition, apply, like our Lord's words, only to *obstinate unbelievers*; to those whose ignorance is *culpable*.

Thanks be to God, there are many who are united to Him by grace, although they do not profess the Catholic Faith. These are those "other sheep" of whom Christ spoke, and whom He will some day bring into the One Fold. They may not be brought into the Fold of the Church Militant, but they belong to the *soul* of the Church, and either at the hour of death or when their purgatory is over, the Good Shepherd will gather them unto His elect. Were it otherwise, were only those who accept the Catholic Faith members of the Church, how could Jesus Christ be the Saviour of *all* men? He knows His sheep by name: He is ever bringing these stragglers into the visible union of His Church. Yet there are thousands of them who reject Catholicism, who cannot accept its teaching, and among them perhaps many who are very dear to us, many whom we feel sure would make such splendid Catholics if only they had the faith.

How can we help them? By prayer, and by being ready to give an answer for the faith that is in us. Thus, once more the great truth is brought home to us that all, in their sphere of action, are called to be apostles by exercising the apostolic spirit of charity and zeal. The laity find splendid outlets for spreading the truth, outlets which are often closed to priests and members of religious orders. Those who desire to do some work for God need not look far before finding some in these days of social activity. It is an excellent plan to take an active part in at least *one* apostolic work.

"Go ye . . . teach all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." It was in virtue of this royal mandate that we were made children of God and members of the Church, heirs of the kingdom of Heaven. How much we owe to our baptism! every sacrament we have received we owe to our baptism,

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for this laver of regeneration gives us a right to all the other means of grace as we need them. How carefully the Catholic Church looks after the spiritual welfare of her children, guiding them into all truth, protecting them from error! As we close our meditation on our dear Lord's charge to His Apostles, let us thank Him for the benefits which, through it, have come down to our souls, and especially for our baptism, which gives us our charter for all the good things provided for the children of the Catholic Church. Thanks be unto God for having made us His adopted children by holy baptism! Not until we cross the threshold of the Heavenly Jerusalem and enjoy the Beatific Vision shall we fully realise all those blessings and privileges of which Holy Baptism has been the source and the gage. Blessed indeed are they who obtain the grace—which the Church asks for all her children—of presenting themselves before the judgment seat of God clad in the unstained robe of their baptismal innocence!

SUMMARY FOR MEDITATION

First Prelude.—Represent the Apostles reclining at table. Suddenly Jesus appears in their midst. They adore Him and rejoice.

Second Prelude.—Ask that you may profit by the instructions of our Risen Lord to His Apostles.

First Point.—Jesus upbraids His disciples for their incredulity. He solemnly announces that the Father has given Him, as the Son of Man, all power in heaven and in earth.

Second Point.—He bids His Apostles go forth and teach all nations, to baptize men, to instruct them in all things which He Himself had taught. He promises to be with them all days.

Third Point.—Baptism is necessary for salvation; yet faith and contrition can take its place, when baptism cannot be had. Men are bound to accept Christ's doctrine; they are not free to form their own religious opinions. Baptism is a pledge of countless graces and privileges.

Colloquy.—Ask that you may ever keep the Faith intact.

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Worship Him to whom all power is given. Pray for those who evangelise, and ask that you may ever do your part in this glorious work. Thank God for the precious heritage of Faith. Pray for those who are wavering and uncertain as regards the Faith. Ask that you may live up to your baptismal promises, by renouncing the devil, the world, and the flesh.

XXIII

CHRIST'S COMMISSION TO HIS APOSTLES

(II)

JESUS had given His Apostles their great Commission, and told them that He had done so in virtue of the universal power in Heaven and in earth having been conferred upon Him by the Father. The Apostles believed firmly in their Risen Lord, but those to whom they preached the Gospel would need some confirmation of the claims put forth by them in the Name of Jesus of Nazareth. The world would naturally ask for the ambassadors' credentials.

When Jesus on two occasions cleansed the Temple, and when He entered the Holy City in triumph, the Jews raised the question as to what authority He had for so doing. At the first cleansing of the Temple they asked: "What sign dost Thou show us, seeing that Thou dost these things?"¹ Our Lord replied by giving them the sign they asked—a veiled prediction of His Resurrection after three days. At the second cleansing of the Temple after His Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem, "when He was teaching the people in the Temple, and preaching the Gospel, the chief priests and the scribes and the ancients came to Him and they said to Him: By what authority doest Thou these things? Or, who is he that hath given Thee this authority to do these things?"² From the context in St. Matthew's Gospel, it is evident that the question regarding His authority and its source had a special reference to His teaching in the Temple, since the

¹ St. John ii. 18.

² St. Matt. xxi. 23; St. Mark xi. 27; St. Luke xx. 1.

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deputation from the Sanhedrin came to Him when He was thus occupied.

Men would ask the same question of Christ's Apostles when they went forth to preach. They would inquire whether they claimed a human or a divine authority ; who had sanctioned or authorised their teaching. For the Jews had a law that no man might teach without having some rabbinical authorisation. The three degrees of Rabbi, Elder, and Judge were conferred only upon those who possessed the necessary knowledge, and after they had passed the prescribed examinations. It was the duty of the Sanhedrin to examine the credentials of those who came forward to teach in order to maintain the Law in all its purity. Now Jesus had expressly bidden His Apostles commence their ministry in Jerusalem, consequently they could not fail to come into collision with the Sanhedrin. If the Jews asked for a rabbi's diploma the Gentiles would ask for some sign, as indeed the Jews also did, and the Risen Saviour, foreseeing men's objections and demands, had provided the answer. Miracles were to be the exterior sign that the Apostles were divinely accredited. It was ever thus that the prophets proved their mission to be from God. "Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews," who "came to Jesus by night," voiced the Jewish view when he said to our Lord : "Rabbi, we know that Thou art come a teacher from God ; for no man can do these signs which Thou dost, unless God be with Him." ¹

The common people also held miracles to be the proof that a prophet's or a rabbi's commission was from God. We have a proof of this in the narration of our Lord's giving sight to a man born blind, for when the Pharisees objected that Jesus could not "be of God," because in their estimation He had infringed the Sabbath rest by working a miracle on the seventh day, St. John tells us that "Others said : How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles ?" and the man to whom sight was given said : "Unless this man were of God He could not do anything," ²

¹ St. John iii. 2.

² St. John ix. 33.

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i.e. any miracle, still less give sight to one congenitally blind. Also we note that when, for the first time, the Apostles were arrested and taken before the Sanhedrin, the first question put touched on the source of their power and authority: "Setting them in their midst," they were asked: "By what power or by what name have you done this?"¹

He who sent forth His delegates as sheep in the midst of wolves, as doves among serpents, did not leave them defenceless, unable to confute their enemies or to prove themselves to be divinely commissioned. Jesus provided for every emergency, and once more He gave them power to work miracles. This time it was conferred *for all time*, not upon all God's ministers, but upon certain chosen servants of God. When the Apostles went on their first mission during our Lord's public life we are told that "He gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of diseases and all manner of infirmities."²

But the time had come to send forth Christ's ministers into the whole world, and to assist them in their super-human task, Jesus gave them supernatural powers. To all of the Apostles the gift of working miracles was given. Jesus said to them: "These signs shall follow them that believe: In My Name they shall cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover."³

Thus the power of working miracles was bequeathed to the Church, not only to the Apostles—for these "signs" were to follow, or rather "accompany" *those who believed* in Christ. Not indeed to *all* believers were they granted, but to those who were called in an especial way to bear witness to the truth of the Gospel message. Miracles, such as God alone could perform, were to be the exterior proofs that God was with those who worked them; these "signs and wonders" were designed to confirm the mission

¹ Acts iv. 7.

² St. Matt. x. 1.

³ St. Mark xvi. 17.

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of those who taught in the name of God, just as God bore witness to the mission of His Son "by signs and wonders and divers miracles."¹ This power given by God of performing miracles is pre-eminently a Divine power, something above the power of created beings, whether men or angels. He who performs the mighty deed is but God's instrument. Hence it follows that no real miracle, since it is the work of God, can ever be wrought for some bad or defective purpose.

All signs were to be wrought *in the Name of Jesus*, and we see how exactly the Apostles conformed to this command. When healing the lame man at the gate of the Temple, St. Peter said to him: "In the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, arise and walk."² The faithful, when they worked a miracle, were absolutely dependent upon their Divine Master, whereas He worked them by His own Divine power. Again, the promise that certain signs should accompany those that believed, does not mean that the power of working *all* miracles was given to each believer who was favoured with miraculous powers. No, it was given to the Church—some saints performing one special kind of miracle, some remarkable for another kind—yet the power was always given for the benefit of all.

"They shall cast out devils." We have but to turn over the pages of the Acts of the Apostles to find the fulfilment of this promise. For example, Philip the deacon preached at Samaria and the people "were attentive to those things which he said, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. For many of them who had unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, went out."³ St. Paul, too, cast a pythical or divining spirit out of a woman, saying to it: "I command thee in the Name of Jesus to go out of her."⁴ In each case, the exorcisms were effected by the power of Christ, by invoking His Name. At Ephesus, miracles of exorcism were wrought even when the Apostle, St. Paul, was not in the presence of those possessed, for when "there were brought from his body to the sick

¹ Heb. ii. 4.

² Acts iii. 6.

³ *Ibid.*, viii. 6.

⁴ *Ibid.*, xvi. 18.

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handkerchiefs and aprons, the disease departed from them and the wicked spirits went out of them.”¹

“They shall speak with new tongues,” *i.e.* with existing tongues unknown—and therefore *new*—to them. It was “not many days hence” when this promise was realised, for on the Day of Pentecost the disciples “were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they began to speak with divers tongues, according as the Holy Ghost gave them to speak.”² This gift of tongues was given also to certain Gentile converts—to Cornelius and his friends. In the first Epistle to the Corinthians St. Paul alludes to “speaking with tongues” as a special gift of God, granted *as and to whom* He pleases.

“They shall take up serpents.” This promise confirmed our Lord’s words uttered when the seventy-two disciples returned from their brief mission: “Behold, I have given you power to tread upon serpents and scorpions and upon all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you.”³ Also, when St. Paul was shipwrecked on the island of Malta “a viper . . . fastened on his hand . . . and he, shaking off the beast into the fire, suffered no harm.”⁴

“If they shall drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them.” We have no scriptural example of the fulfilment of this promise, but a well-authenticated tradition records that St. John was once forced to drink hemlock but suffered no harm.

“They shall lay their hands upon the sick and they shall recover.” Of this power of healing being exercised in the primitive Church we have numerous examples. It does not, of course, refer to the administration of Extreme Unction, since none but priests could confer this sacrament, but to the power of healing the sick instantaneously and miraculously. We read of the scenes recorded of our Lord being renewed in Jerusalem and elsewhere by His Apostles and disciples. St. Luke records that “by the hands of the

¹ Acts xix. 12.

³ St. Luke x. 19.

² *Ibid.*, ii. 4.

⁴ Acts xxviii. 1.

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Apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people,"¹ and that "There came also to Jerusalem a multitude out of the neighbouring cities, bringing sick persons and such as were troubled with unclean spirits, who were all healed."² Here we have the double power recorded—power over Nature and over the devil. St. Stephen did great wonders and signs among the people,"³ and St. Philip, by his miracles, gained a hearing from the Samaritans, for by his instrumentality "many taken with the palsy and that were lame were healed."⁴

In this majestic Commission our Risen Lord does not explicitly bid His disciples raise the dead, as He bade His Apostles on their first mission, but this power was included, since we have the examples of St. Peter's raising the holy widow Tabitha, and of St. Paul's raising Eutychus. Ecclesiastical history gives us numerous examples of the Saints having performed similar miracles.

Are miracles worked in the twentieth century still? Yes. Lourdes gives a most emphatic answer in the affirmative. Moreover, saints are still being raised to our altars, and none are canonised unless the authorities, charged to deal with these questions—(the Sacred Congregations of Rites, charged to watch over all that concerns the invocation of saints and the veneration paid to images and relics)—have good grounds for believing that those who are put forward for the honours of canonisation have wrought miracles during their lives or after their death. Therefore no saints have ever been formally canonised unless—in addition to the exercise of the theological and the cardinal virtues—it could be shown that God had conferred miraculous powers upon them—though the mere fact of a Catholic having worked a miracle does not prove his holiness—a bad man might work a miracle as a testimony to the truth of the Gospel. But while all miracles, recorded as such in the Scriptures, must be accepted by every Catholic, those worked by the saints are not so binding on their

¹ Acts v. 12.

³ *Ibid.*, vi. 8.

² *Ibid.*, v. 16.

⁴ *Ibid.*, viii. 8.

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belief, nevertheless, all the faithful children of the Church must believe that Jesus Christ has left to His Church, for all time, the power of working miracles, consequently that they are still worked in our days *when* and *where* God sees fit to put forth His power.

Having bestowed these supernatural powers upon them, powers which they were to exercise for the benefit of their brethren—not for themselves—Jesus continued to instruct His disciples. “He said to them: These are the words which I spoke to you, while I was yet with you, that all things must needs be fulfilled which are written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms concerning Me.” Then, because human reason and intelligence cannot rise to the plane of spiritual truths so as to grasp them as men comprehend material things, Jesus “opened their understanding” that His Apostles might “understand the Scriptures.” “He said to them: Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that penance and remission of sins should be preached in His Name, beginning at Jerusalem, and you are witnesses of these things.”

Our Lord appears to have given the Apostles the same explanations which He had given to the disciples of Emmaus, to whom “He expounded . . . in all the Scriptures the things that were concerning Him.” How well the Apostles understood His lessons now may be seen from certain passages in the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles. In each of St. Peter’s sermons we find allusions to or echoes of the words of the great Commission. For example, in his first sermon, we find these words: “This Jesus hath God raised again, whereof all we are witnesses.”¹ “Peter said to them: Do penance and be baptized every one of you, in the Name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of your sins.”² When St. Peter was brought before the Sanhedrin he boldly asserted that: “There is no other Name given under heaven, whereby we must be saved.”³

We have seen that one of the chief duties of an Apostle

¹ Acts ii. 32.

² *Ibid.*, ii. 38.

³ *Ibid.*, iv. 12.

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was to bear witness to the Life, Death, and Resurrection of Christ. It was that He might fit them for this, that Jesus granted them so many manifestations of His glorified Body, though He tempered Its glory so that they might look upon Him. Then, having given them the charge to bear witness to Him, Jesus proceeded to give them the assistance needful for this great work, by promising them the abiding Presence of the Holy Ghost in all His fulness—as far as human beings could receive of it: Listen to the blessed promise as it fell from our Saviour's lips: "I send the promise of the Father upon you; but stay you in the city till you be endued with power from on high. For John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost, not many days hence."

"*I send you the promise of the Father.*" "*I send,*" the pronoun is very emphatic in the original Greek, for the Holy Ghost, who came upon the Apostles in fulfilment of the Father's promise, "*proceedeth from the Father and the Son.*" The Holy Ghost is the gift of the Son, as well as of the Father. If our Lord once said to His Apostles: "I will ask the Father, and He shall give you another Paraclete, that He may abide with you for ever,"¹ our Lord likewise promised to *send* the Paraclete Himself: *cf.* "If I go not, the Paraclete will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you."² The Apostles knew the Scriptures, they had heard the prophecy of Joel read in the synagogues. That pouring out of the spirit of God "upon all flesh" was close at hand; the promise was to be realised "not many days hence."

Jesus was on the eve of His Ascension, and therefore He gave His commands as to what He would have His disciples do when He had left the earth: "Stay in the city": there where Jesus was crucified, the Holy Ghost would descend; there the Church of Christ was to be founded in power, and yet in weakness, as far as the human instruments were concerned. The Apostles were to await in Jerusalem—the city of peace, the city Jesus loved so

¹ St. John xiv. 16.

² *Ibid.*, xvi. 7.

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well—the coming of the Paraclete. They were to abide there until the Holy Ghost “endued” or clothed them with power from on high. This power was to have a marvellous, supernatural influence over their whole lives. Many of the Apostles had heard the Baptist’s eloquent words, some, like James and John, Peter and Andrew, Philip and Bartholomew, had been his disciples. They had witnessed the wonderful effects of John’s teaching, and were themselves among the multitudes who flocked to hear John in the desert of Judea, when “All they of Jerusalem were baptized by him in the River Jordan, confessing their sins.”¹ The Baptist’s mission had been a grand spiritual force: it had aroused the Jews from their lethargy, quickened their religious convictions and their earnest longing for the coming of the Messias. But great as were the effects of the Baptist’s mission, they were to be far exceeded by that of the Apostles after they had received the baptism of the spirit, after the Living Water had been poured out upon their souls.

We have meditated on the Great Commission of Christ to His Apostles and tried to penetrate into the inner meaning of His sacred words and commandments. We will now look at his discourse as a whole, and in order to strengthen our faith examine the logical deductions which we may draw from Christ’s last charge to His Apostles.

1. The Apostles could not obey our Lord’s command to preach the Gospel *to all nations, to every creature*, unless they were to have successors having the same credentials as their Divine Master had given them. Whence it follows that to the end of time a divinely authorised teaching body must exist, charged to carry on the work of the Apostles.

2. Since “all creatures” were bound to accept the teaching of the Apostles, under pain of “condemnation,” it follows that they must have been preserved from teaching error, and, like the Apostles, their successors were also to be preserved from error, *i.e.* they must have the gift of infallibility. Were it otherwise, God would be condemning

¹ St. Mark i. 5.

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men for not accepting some erroneous belief, which would be contrary to His Veracity and Justice.

3. The Church, founded by the Apostles, can never cease to exist, since the Gospel truths are to be preached "to all nations." "even to the consummation of the world." The doctrines taught to the Apostles and preached by them were destined to be preserved intact throughout all generations, therefore the true faith can never cease to exist in the world.

4. The *same* doctrines were to be delivered to *all nations* ; since the Apostles were commissioned to teach what they had learned from Christ. There was to be unity of doctrine.

5. The doctrines taught by the successors of the Apostles were to be the same as those promulgated by the Apostles themselves. Hence the true faith must be *Apostolic*.

Summarising these five inferences we see from (1) and (2) that an infallible teaching body, having Divine authority, must exist upon the earth. From (3) and (4) we deduce that this teaching body must be *universal* in *time, place, and doctrine*. From (5) we prove that it must be *Apostolic*.

Hence, in the Great Commission of Christ to His Apostles, we have the "*charta*" on which the words of the Nicene Creed are based :

"I believe in *One, Holy, Catholic, Apostolic* Church." What a glorious privilege it is to be a faithful member of the Catholic Church ! No society organised merely by men can claim the four marks which distinguish the Catholic Church. True, these sects have their marks, but precisely those which offer the greatest contrast to the characteristics of the Church of Christ, being *manifold, local, modern, and often teaching perversely*. The poorest human being who is a sheep of the One true Fold can exclaim with the Psalmist : "The lines are fallen unto me in goodly places, for my inheritance is goodly to me. I will bless the Lord, who hath given me understanding . . . Therefore my heart hath been glad, and my tongue rejoiced ;

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moreover, my flesh also shall rest in hope. . . . Thou hast made known to me the ways of life.”¹

Our inheritance is indeed “goodly.” During our earthly pilgrimage the Church opens out her treasures to the weakest and poorest. There is no distinction of persons within her Fold, and when death overtakes them their flesh rests in hope, expecting the resurrection of the body in God’s appointed time. We are children of the grand old Catholic Church which no rack, rope, fire or sword has been able to overthrow. Men, by doing their worst, do but supply to brave Catholics the coveted opportunity of bearing witness for Christ, even unto the shedding of blood. It is the persecutors who furnish the Church with her martyrs and confessors—the *élite* of the faithful; the saints whom we honour and invoke. We cannot imagine the Church without her “noble army of martyrs,” her “glorious company” of confessors and saints from every nation under heaven.

But great privileges bring great responsibilities, therefore we must show our gratitude to God for His having called us to be children of the Church, by fidelity to her teaching in our daily lives. St. Paul reminded his converts of this great duty when he wrote thus: “I therefore, a prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation in which you are called.”² “Walk worthy of God, in all things well-pleasing.” Then he goes on to explain what it means to be “well-pleasing.”

It consists in “being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God: strengthened with all might according to the power of His glory, in all patience and long-suffering with joy. Giving thanks to God the Father, who has made us worthy to be partakers of the lot of the saints on high, who hath delivered us from the power of darkness and hath translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the remission of sins.”³ What a beautiful graphic pen-portrait of a faithful disciple of Jesus,

¹ Ps. xv.

² Eph. iv. 1.

³ Col. iii. 10.

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of a loyal child of the Church ! “ In all things well pleasing ” : this connotes abounding in good works, growing in the knowledge of God, and in strength, suffering with joy, grateful for our Father's tender mercies. It gives the portrait of the Christian who walks worthy of his sublime vocation, “ worthy of God.” How far do we try to live up to this high standard ?

SUMMARY FOR MEDITATION

First Prelude.—Represent our Lord standing in the midst of His Apostles giving them their great Commission.

Second Prelude.—Ask for the grace to realise and appreciate all the blessings that come to us through our Lord's charge to His Apostles.

First Point.—Jesus promises that the gift of miracles shall be bestowed upon believers, as a testimony to the truth of His doctrine. Scripture records the realisation of this promise.

Second Point.—Jesus opens the Apostles' intelligence. He sends them forth as witnesses, but bids them tarry in Jerusalem until they are endued with power from on high.

Third Point.—He promises them the spiritual baptism of the Holy Ghost “ not many days hence.” The Great Commission is the “ *charta* ” of the One, Holy, Catholic, Apostolic Church. We should be grateful for our privileges as Catholics, walk worthy of our calling, striving to realise in our lives St. Paul's sublime portrait of one who is “ well-pleasing to God.”

Colloquy.—Make a sincere act of faith in all the Church teaches. Thank God for the inestimable gift of faith. Pray for non-Catholics, especially for your friends and relatives. Ask that you too may be a witness for Christ. Pray for grace to walk as a child of light. Ask for the grace of final perseverance. Pray for those who evangelise. Ask for grace to profit by the manifold graces received through the Church of Christ.

XXIV

JESUS LEADS HIS DISCIPLES OUT TO MOUNT OLIVET

“**H**E ascended into Heaven, sitteth at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty.” How often we have said these solemn words, perhaps without reflecting much on their meaning! Let us therefore, in this meditation, try to bring the scene of the Ascension before our eyes, to assist in spirit at the majestic departure of Christ from this earth that we inhabit and which His sacred feet once trod. Once again we will strive to

“ Turn back the veil, and see the world as when
The Master walked ;
Delve into hearts of men to whom
The Master talked.”

We will follow the harmonised Scriptural narratives, and by considering the *time, place, witnesses, and circumstances* of the mystery of our Lord's Ascension, endeavour to gather some spiritual fruits for our needy souls.

We obtain our detailed knowledge of incidents connected with the Ascension chiefly from St. Luke, who refers to it briefly in his Gospel, and gives a fuller account in the Acts of the Apostles. Though both St. Matthew and St. John have allusions to the Ascension, neither mentions it at the end of his Gospel. They simply quote our Lord's words in which He referred to His dwelling in Heaven and His ascending there. (*Cf.* “ They shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, with much power and majesty,”¹ “ I ascend to My Father, and to your Father, to My God, and to your God.”)

¹ St. Matt. xxiv. 30.

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St. Mark, after having recorded the Great Commission and the signs which were to be the credentials of believers, goes on to summarise the Ascension in these brief words "The Lord Jesus, after He had spoken to them, was taken up into Heaven and sitteth on the right hand of God." Had we only the second Gospel, we might have supposed that Jesus ascended into Heaven from the Cenacle or upper room in which He had appeared to His Apostles "whilst they were at table." St. Mark's brief account and St. Luke's two narratives have been harmonised as follows by eminent commentators :

"Jesus showed Himself alive after His passion by many proofs, for forty days appearing to them and speaking of the kingdom of God. And He led them out as far as Bethania. They, therefore, who were come together asked him, saying : "Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom of Israel ?" But He said : "It is not for you to know the times or the moments which the Father hath put in His own power. But you shall receive the power of the Holy Ghost, coming upon you, and you shall be witnesses unto Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the uttermost parts of the earth." ¹

We will consider this portion of the narrative first. It gives us the *time* of the Ascension, which took place after Jesus had "for (or better 'during') forty days manifested Himself at intervals to His disciples." Only eleven apparitions are recorded, but there were probably many more, and the subject of our Lord's instruction was "the kingdom of God," *i.e.* the founding of the Catholic Church.

Nearly six weeks had passed since Jesus rose triumphant from the grave, and during this time He had removed His Apostles' doubts and fears, opened their understanding, and given them the instructions necessary for their great work. He had promised them the assistance of the Holy Ghost, who should lead them into all truth, and recall to their minds whatever He had taught them. Our Lord's work upon earth was done—as He had

¹ Acts i. 3, 6-8 ; St. Luke xxiv. 50.

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told them at the Last Supper—it was expedient that He should go away, that He might send the Paraclete to them.

For more than thirty-three years, the earth had possessed the Incarnate Son of God. He had lived among men—Himself “the Son of man.” Now His last day upon earth had come, His last hours with His disciples were speeding on their course. How we cherish the remembrance of the last days and hours upon earth of those whom God has called hence and who were and still are so dear to us! Yet how different were the last hours and moments upon earth of the Risen Saviour from those even of a dying saint! For His were a glorious triumph, already He had overcome the sharpness of death, and thus He could ascend, Body and Soul, into Heaven.

As we have seen in the preceding meditations, Jesus' last visit was characterised by the former familiar intercourse with His disciples. It is generally believed that He accompanied His disciples, at least the Eleven—if not the rest, who made up the number of one hundred and twenty of whom St. Luke speaks—from the Cenacle to Mount Olivet, for the words “*as far as*” Bethania would be better translated “*over against*” Bethania. The same Evangelist also relates that, after Jesus had departed, “The disciples went back to Jerusalem . . . from the mount which is called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, within a Sabbath day's journey.” On this passage Lightfoot remarks: “These words do not define the exact distance of the Mount of Olives from Jerusalem, which indeed was but five furlongs, nor do they take in the town of Bethany within the bounds of the Sabbath, which was distant fifteen furlongs (*cf.* “Bethania was near Jesusalem, about fifteen furlongs off”),¹ but they point out that place of the Mount where our Saviour ascended into Heaven, *i.e.* the place where that tract of the Mount of Olives ceased to be called Bethphage, and began to be called Bethany.”²

“He led them out over against Bethania.” If, as many commentators think, Jesus “appeared to the Eleven

¹ St. John xi. 18.

² Horæ Hebraice, *in h.l.*

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as they were at table" in the Cenacle, *i.e.* in the house of Mary, the mother of John Mark, which was situated on the south of Mount Zion, then we can follow or better still in spirit accompany our dear Lord and His Apostles, as He leads them out of Jerusalem and up the slopes of Mount Olivet.

According to an ancient tradition, our dear Lady, the ministering women, and the disciples numbering one hundred and twenty were present at the Ascension, as well as the Eleven Apostles: and certainly among the disciples were to be found St. Matthias and "Joseph, called Barsabas," of whom it is said: "These men have companied with us (*i.e.* with the Apostles) all the time that the Lord Jesus came in and went out among us, beginning from the baptism of John *until the day wherein He was taken up from us.*"¹ Doubtless all this little company were not at table with the Eleven; it seems probable that Jesus may have appointed to meet them outside the city or on the summit of Olivet.

Jesus, the Good Shepherd, leads His own out; for the third time since His Resurrection He walks with them as He went with the two disciples along the road to Emmaus, as He walked with the seven disciples along the shore of the Sea of Tiberias after the second miraculous draught of fishes. We may presume that Jesus leads the Eleven. Some of the ministering women, accompanied by His blessed Mother, follow. The others will join them on the Mount of Olives. The little band passes along the narrow raised footpaths of Mount Sion, led by their Risen Saviour, who is visible to His own but not to those who pass by. Why should He manifest Himself to His enemies? If they were to become His disciples afterwards they must accept the fact of the Resurrection as an article of faith, on the testimony of His chosen witnesses, even as it was appointed for all future disciples. If men "hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they believe if one rose from the dead."²

¹ Acts i. 21.

² St. Luke xvi. 31.

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The road from the Cenacle to the summit of Olivet led past the palaces of Annas and Caiphas, skirted the royal palace of Herod the Great, and then turned eastwards. Jesus and His disciples passed over the magnificent bridge which connected the southern Cloister of the Temple with the Upper City. They probably left Jerusalem by the Gate of the Tribes, crossed the brook Cedron where three paths opened out before them, of which the middle one led up by a gentle slope to the central summit, for the range of Olivet has three peaks. Probably this middle path was the one along which Jesus led His disciples. At the foot of Olivet, on their right, lay the farm of Gethsemani with its olive trees and its oil-press. What memories it aroused! There Jesus was "sorrowful unto death," while His Apostles slumbered and slept. There Judas, the traitor, had led the Roman soldiers and given the kiss of treachery.

Look around: the slopes of Olivet are clothed with verdure. There are vineyards, olive groves, clumps of pomegranates and almonds. Here and there rise woods of oak and terebinth. The fields are marked off with loose rows of stones, and the wheat harvest is ready to be gathered in. Ten days later, at the Feast of Pentecost, the first-fruits of wheat will be offered in the Temple, and the deputies of the Sanhedrin have already selected and tied loosely together—though leaving it still standing—the portion which is to be offered to God. The summer flowers are now blooming; masses of anemones spring up on all sides. The Cedron ripples and splashes on its way through the Valley of Josaphat and thence on to the Dead Sea.

A quarter of an hour's walk brings the traveller to the spot which Jesus has chosen for His farewell. Close by is the place where Jesus had sat when He predicted the fall of Jerusalem and the end of the world. A little farther south He commenced His Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem amid the Hosannas of the Galilean pilgrims and Judean disciples. If Mount Olivet was sacred to the Jews because the Tabernacle had stood for years on the northern summit, it is far,

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far dearer to the Christian, with all its precious memories of our Lord.

“By one of those strange coincidences, whether accidental or borrowed, which occasionally appear in the Rabbinical writings, it is said in the Mishna that the Shechinah, or Presence of God (which covered the Ark of the Covenant originally), after having finally retired from Jerusalem, ‘dwelt three years and a half on the Mount of Olives to see whether the Jewish people would or would not repent, calling, “Return to me, O my son, and I will return to you”: “Seek ye the Lord while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near.”’”¹ Whatever be the value of this tradition, we Christians know that the Shechinah appeared on Mount Olivet when Jesus was glorified there and ascended thence into Heaven.

Up the gentle slope Jesus leads the Eleven and the other disciples: they reach the summit, and He stands in their midst. So often the Apostles and disciples had stood thus around their loved Master and conversed with Him. Now several wish to question their Lord, for we read that “they who were come together asked Him, saying: Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore the kingdom of Israel?”

From our Lord’s reply we learn that the question was asked by some of the Eleven. Perhaps as the restoration of the kingdom was frequently connected with the outpouring of the Spirit, our Lord’s words concerning their baptism by the Holy Ghost “not many days hence” had for the moment turned the Apostles’ thoughts to the temporal kingdom of the Messiah—the dearest wish of every Jew. As a nation, the Jews longed for deliverance from a foreign yoke—knowing well that their bondage was a punishment for their sins. The form of the question in the Greek implies a doubt and is thus rendered by the Vulgate. Yet the question shows that they still expected the establishment of a temporal kingdom of great power and glory. In the Messiah’s reign, they looked for far more than the splendours of David and Solomon. It was thus that they

¹ *Sinai and Palestine*, ch. iii. p. 189, ed. 1875, by Dean Stanley.

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interpreted such passages as the subjoined—as predictions of an earthly kingdom: “I will restore thy judges as they were before, and thy counsellors as of old. After this, thou shalt be called the city of the just, a faithful city.”¹ The Messias “shall sit upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom.”² “In those days shall Juda be saved and Israel dwell confidently.”³

How did our Lord reply? Not by telling them that there would be no earthly triumphal reign, but by checking their unwise curiosity, leaving it to the Holy Ghost to rectify their erroneous conceptions when He came upon them in the promised fulness of His power. On the Day of Pentecost they would learn that this world was not destined to be an earthly Paradise, the place of the Messias’ temporal reign—since the power which the Father was about to send was to be a spiritual one. Moreover experience, too, would soon make it patent that toil, suffering, and privations were to be their lot in this world, rather than rest, enjoyment, and plenty—in a word, that their Master’s kingdom was “not of this world,” as He had so often told them.

Therefore “He said to them: It is not for you to know the times or the moments which the Father hath put in His own power.” Jesus ever ascribed to His Father all knowledge concerning “times and moments,” especially as regards the day of judgment, which is destined to inaugurate His eternal reign of glory. Thus He once told them: “Of that day or hour no man knoweth, neither the angels in Heaven, nor the Son, but the Father.”⁴ Commentators explain “*times*” as meaning “periods of duration,” and “*moments*” as certain fitting points of time, and both these are in the absolute power of the Father—in *His very own* (ἐν τῇ ἰδίᾳ), as the Greek reads.

“Lord, wilt Thou *at this time* restore again the kingdom of Israel?” The question recalls an incident which had happened about two months previously in the city of Jericho. It was just before Jesus made His Triumphal

¹ Isa. i. 26.

³ Jer. xxiii. 6.

² *Ibid.*, ix. 7.

⁴ St. Mark xiii. 32

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Entry into Jerusalem. He was at Jericho, in the house of Zacheus, having made a brief stay there on His last visit to Jerusalem. At this time Christ's disciples had an intense longing for the establishment of the Messianic kingdom. He was going up to the Holy City, with a great multitude of His Galilean followers, to keep the Pasch. The disciples' hopes were raised to the highest pitch of excitement, their thoughts frequently reverted to the inauguration of that temporal reign for which they yearned. We can understand their enthusiasm at the mere thought that, in a few brief hours perhaps, their loved Master might enter Jerusalem, there to be acknowledged as the Messiah by His bitter enemies. Jesus then endeavoured to dispel these illusions by teaching them, in the Parable of the Pounds, that they must possess their souls in patience and labour in His service meanwhile.

St. Luke explicitly gives these illusions of Christ's disciples as the proximate cause of His uttering this parable. The Evangelist says: "He spoke a parable, because He was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately be manifested," then our Lord proceeded to speak of the "certain nobleman" who went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return."¹ These false hopes found expression in the "Hosannas" of Palm Sunday and again on Ascension Day. Even then they did not realise that Jesus had indeed to go "*into a far country,*" and that His final triumph would long be delayed.

Once more Jesus crushed their fond hopes by bidding them work for Him as faithful servants. Turning their thoughts to their great mission, He spoke of the coming of the Paraclete. "But you shall receive the power of the Holy Ghost coming upon you, and you shall be witnesses unto Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the uttermost parts of the earth." The Acts of the Apostles prove how faithfully the Apostles fulfilled their noble mission as witnesses to their Master. Also it sets

¹ St. Luke xix. 11.

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forth their exact obedience to the commands of their Lord as regards the *order* in which they evangelised—they began in Jerusalem, continued in Judea, and then went on to the uttermost parts of the civilised world—to Asia Minor, Greece, Macedonia, and Rome.

This reply of Jesus to His disciples' question is but a final reiteration of His command: "Go ye into all the world, preach the Gospel to every creature," explicitly specifying *the order* in which they were to evangelise.

In the first year of His Public Ministry, when sitting on Jacob's well in Samaria surrounded by His Apostles, Jesus had said to them: "Behold, I say to thee, lift up your eyes and see the countries, for they are white already to harvest. And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth the fruit unto life everlasting."¹ On another occasion He had said: "The harvest indeed is great, but the labourers are few. Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He send forth labourers into His harvest."² The solemn hour had now come to "thrust in the sickle" in the Name of their Lord and in the Power of the Holy Ghost.

Witnesses for Christ throughout the world! What a grand mission confided to "earthen vessels"—to frail men, but men upon whom the power of the Holy Ghost had come. The Old Law was limited to the Jewish people; they kept their privileges almost exclusively for themselves. If they received "proselytes of the gate" or "of righteousness," they did not seek them, nor did the latter ever enjoy the fullest blessings of the Covenant made with the chosen people of God. The New Covenant was destined to bring better things; unlike the Mosaic Dispensation, it was to be *universal*. The Ambassadors of the Messiah were commissioned to go into *all the world*, to be witnesses to *every creature* of the Life, Death, and Resurrection of Christ, to promulgate His teaching. The moment of the establishment of the Messianic kingdom, for which prophets, priests, and kings had so longed, of which they had prophesied, was now at hand.

¹ St. John iv. 35.

² St. Matt. ix. 37.

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During the life of our Lord upon earth—as during the centuries which preceded it—He had had His witnesses. The Angel Gabriel announced His Incarnation, the heavenly choirs rejoiced when He was born. Among the children of men who spoke of Him to those “who looked for the Redemption of Israel” were Zachary, Holy Simeon, St. Elizabeth, and holy Anna. The Precursor bade men prepare the ways for Him, and pointed Him out as “the Lamb of God.” The seventy-two disciples and the twelve Apostles evangelised in the towns and hamlets of Judea. Jesus also bore testimony to Himself by His words and mighty works, though “His own received Him not.”

After His Ascension the testimony was to be given by chosen witnesses. Twelve of Jesus’ disciples were chosen to found the Church—they were the Apostles—the ones “sent” by Christ to accomplish this grand work. We look at the little band of twelve men. How impotent they seemed for the stupendous work which lay before them. In themselves they were indeed weak, but the Power of God worked in and through their faithful ministry. They needed this outpouring of the Holy Ghost; without His Power how could they expect to obtain even a hearing in Jerusalem, whose rulers had crucified the Messiah? Yet Jesus willed that their testimony should first be given there—to the sheep of the house of Israel. By so doing the ancient prophecies were fulfilled. Isaias had foretold that “The Law shall come forth from Sion and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.”¹ Joel had delivered the same message: “In Mount Sion and in Jerusalem shall be salvation as the Lord hath said,”² while Zacharias had foreseen the outpouring of the Spirit in the Holy City: “It shall come to pass in that day that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem.”³

How did they accomplish their mission? “If thou seekest their memorial, look around.” But a few days later the high-priest summoned the Apostles before his tribunal in Jerusalem, and commanded that they should

¹ Isa. ii. 3.

² Joel ii. 32.

³ Zach. xiv. 8.

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not continue to teach in the Name of Jesus, because already they had filled Jerusalem with their teaching.¹ Three hundred years later pagan Rome yielded to Christianity, a Christian Emperor sat on the throne. In our times most of the civilised nations are Christian. The Christian Faith has set its seal upon the arts and sciences ; it has consecrated architecture, music, and literature, and revolutionised human thought. True, men still revolt against the yoke of Christ, but their persecution only serves to scatter the good seed that it may take root elsewhere. France, by disestablishing Christianity, has but given the Church her liberty, and Catholicism, far from losing ground through the intolerance of atheists and socialists, has made visible progress. Thus the grain of mustard seed has grown till it has become a tree in which the birds of the air can build their nests, thus it will continue to grow until, by the testimony of God's ambassadors, it becomes the home of all nations. Thanks be to God that in this testimony of the Apostles, all the faithful have by right their part. All are called to walk worthy of the vocation to which they are called "in all things well-pleasing to God."

SUMMARY FOR MEDITATION

First Prelude.—Represent to yourself our Blessed Lord leading out His Apostles from the Holy City to the central summit of Olivet. They converse on the way thither.

Second Prelude.—Ask that the kingdom of Christ—the Catholic Church—may indeed come in power by the conversion of many non-Catholics and pagans.

First Point.—Jesus leaves the Cenacle with the Eleven. He leads them to Mount Olivet, "over against Bethania." Our Lord's work on earth is accomplished ; He is about to take leave of His disciples.

Second Point.—The Eleven question their Master concerning the restoration of the temporal kingdom of the Messias. They were still in error as to the true nature of His glorious reign, not realising that it was to be a spiritual one.

¹ Acts v. 28.

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Third Point.—Jesus gently reproves their curiosity, telling them that the Father keeps in His very own power the knowledge of the times and moments. He turns their thoughts to their great work, and bids them bear witness to Him. He indicates the order in which they are to evangelise, “beginning at Jerusalem.”

Colloquy.—Pray for grace to accomplish the work which God has marked out for you. Beg our Lord to bless the efforts of His ministers. Ask Him to place within your reach some means of spreading the Faith. Ask to be counted among the labourers in His vineyard. Beg Him to keep you from idle curiosity, ever ready to accept all from His hand, good or evil, as the world calls it. Thank our Lord for founding the Catholic Church, for providing thus for your sanctification and salvation.

XXV

THE ASCENSION OF OUR LORD

STILL we stand in spirit on the central summit of Olivet; let us look around at the glorious panorama that meets the eye on every side. To the north-east the hills slope down towards the fertile plains of Jericho—the city of palms and roses. Southward, for some fourteen miles, the road leads very steeply down to the Dead Sea, of which the still lifeless waters reflect the cloudless blue sky as they gleam in the noonday sun. In the background, tower the Hills of Moab with their rich varied colours. Still further south stretches out the Desert of Judea. Its low, shifting sand-dunes resemble the billows of the sea, and the scanty stunted shrubs mingle their olive and sage-green tints with the white limestone rocks and the yellow sand.

Look to the west: Jerusalem rises in all its majestic beauty. The glorious Temple stands, in all its wealth of gold and marble, upon the plateau of Mount Moriah. Involuntarily we shade our eyes with our hand as we glance at the gilded turrets and exquisitely veined marble walls. The Jews were wont to compare these veined marbles to the billows of the ocean. The House of the Lord stands upon the highest terrace of the vast Temple area. Behind it can be seen the Castle of Antonia—a hateful reminder to Israel of their subjection to Rome. To the south-west rises the Hill of Sion, on which is built “the city of palaces.” Of these palaces, two can be seen distinctly from the summit of Olivet—the ancient Machabean Palace, in which Herod now dwells whenever he visits Jerusalem, and the Royal Palace, built by Herod the Great,



Photo Alinari.

The Ascension.

The Ascension of Our Lord

but now used by Pontius Pilate the Roman Governor. We note the hundred turrets, the vast colonnade, and also the massive towers on the northern side. The palms and poplars in Herod's gardens—south of this palace—stand out against the horizon.

We look below at the Valley of Cedron or Jehosaphat. The brook runs through the dark ravine ; on the western side of Cedron the mountains rise sheer from the valley. All along its course, especially on the right bank of the stream, the hills are honeycombed with sepulchres and graves of different ages. There are the tombs of the kings, of the prophets, of the judges of Israel. Here and there, too, may be seen modern gorgeously-sculptured sarcophagi of the Roman period.

All Jews wished their bones to lie in the Valley of Jehosaphat, since they believed firmly that on the Resurrection morning the Messiah would there gather all men before His tribunal, and that those whose bones reposed there would not have to toil painfully through the earth from their respective burial-places.

This ancient tradition partly accounts for the number of sepulchres. Another reason why they are so numerous is because it was forbidden to bury the dead in the Holy City. No corpse might remain for even one night in Jerusalem, since it was a source of legal defilement—therefore the dead were interred before the sundown of the day of their decease. As we look at these tombs, the words of the Gospel recur to our minds, reminding us that on Easter Sunday "Many bodies of the saints that had slept arose, and coming out of the tombs after His Resurrection, *came into the Holy City* and appeared to many."¹ Some of these graves are still open on this bright Ascension Day. Orientals never hasten to repair damages ; the stones are rolled away from the tombs of these saints, even as the stone was rolled away from His sepulchre after He rose triumphant.

Where are these many saints now ? They are invisibly

¹ St. Matt. xxvii. 52.

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present on the summit of Olivet, waiting for the moment of the Messias' final triumph and of their own. They are destined to be the trophies of His victory over Sin and Death ; these *many saints*, to whom the Kingdom of Heaven will so speedily be opened, are to grace Christ's entry into His Kingdom—"the first-fruits to God and to the Lamb." ¹ Among them we shall doubtless find those saints of the Old Testament whose characters, lives, and words in some way set forth the distinctive traits and deeds of the King Messias.

Jesus once said to the Jews : " Abraham, your father, rejoiced that he might see My day ; he saw it, and was glad." ² On this blessed Ascension Day Abraham indeed sees it and is glad. All the holy patriarchs, prophets, and kings, many humble sons of Israel, likewise see it and rejoice, and probably some who, like holy Simeon, St. Joseph, and St. John the Baptist, had died during our Lord's lifetime. All these, we may presume, were assembled—invisible to human eyes—worshipping their King, a multitude of the redeemed waiting for the majestic Triumphal procession to form. Yet among all these saints none is so great before Jehovah, so dear to the Risen Saviour as Mary, His Mother, our Queen, who, standing upon Mount Olivet, gazes with unspeakable love and rapture upon the Divinely illumined features of her Son and her God.

But we must return to our contemplation of our blessed Lord, who is about to quit for ever the earth He has hallowed by His presence. We will follow the Gospel narrative. " And when He had said these things, lifting up His hands, He blessed them, and it came to pass whilst He blessed them that He departed from them. While they looked on He was raised up and was carried up to Heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God. And a cloud received Him out of their sight." ³

Thus briefly and graphically St. Luke describes the Ascension of our Risen Saviour. In these few sentences the Evangelist sets the scene before us. On his words are based the ninth article of the Creed, which we repeat daily :

¹ Apoc. xiv. 4. ² St. John viii. 56. ³ St. Luke xxiv. 51 ; Acts i. 9.

The Ascension of Our Lord

“ He ascended into Heaven, sitteth at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty.”

Jesus ascended after “ *He had said these things,*” that is, after He had given His Apostles their Great Commission and bade them bear witness to Him in all the world. The last incident of His glorious Life upon earth was about to be enacted before their eyes. As witnesses to Him, it was fitting that the Apostles should see Him ascend to His Father and their Father—to His God and their God.

It is the hour of noon, according to an ancient tradition, when Jesus stands thus in the midst of His own—the Apostles, some disciples, the ministering women, and His blessed Mother. Did they know that the hour of the final departure was so close at hand? Surely Mary knew and likewise the Apostles, for all the events of the Great Forty Days had been gradually preparing them for it. The former relations of Jesus’ Public Life had never been fully renewed; generally, He came and went quite unexpectedly: He no longer dwelt continually with the Apostles. Nor did He ever, as far as we know, allow any of His enemies to see Him after He rose from the grave. He neither preached nor worked miracles in public as before. Then, too, His teaching was different in character; it concerned their future work; He was continually “ speaking of the kingdom of God.” He had chosen Peter as His immediate successor upon earth, and conferred the Primacy upon him in presence of his companions. Finally, our Lord gave His last Great Commission to the whole Apostolic College and pointed out clearly the order in which they were to evangelise after they had received “ the Promise of the Father ”—the outpouring of the Spirit. All the incidents of those blessed forty days had converged towards one point—the last event of our Lord’s life upon earth—His Ascension to the Father.

In the Old Testament—like so many other events concerning the Messiah—the Ascension is typified by the taking up of Elias and a double portion of his spirit being bestowed upon his successor Eliseus. The great prophet

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of Israel knew that he was about to be taken away, and he seems to have desired to spare Eliseus the pain of the separation. Hence, when they were at Galgal, Elias said to him: "Stay thou here, because the Lord hath sent me as far as Bethel." But Eliseus replied: "As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee" . . . "and they two went on together." At Bethel, and again at Jericho, the sons of the prophets "came forth to Eliseus and said to him: Dost thou know that this day the Lord will take away thy master from thee? And he answered; I also know it, hold ye your peace." Then when the two prophets had crossed the Jordan—after having miraculously divided the waters of the river—Elias said to Eliseus: "Ask what thou wilt have me to do for thee before I be taken from thee. And Eliseus said: I beseech thee that in me may be thy double spirit. And he answered: Thou hast asked a hard thing: nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken from thee thou shalt have what thou hast asked. . . . And as they went on, walking and talking together, behold a fiery chariot and fiery horses parted them both asunder, and Elias went up by a whirlwind into heaven . . . and Eliseus saw him no more."¹

Could we have asked the faithful disciples of Jesus as they stood around Him on the summit of Olivet: "Dost thou know that this day the Lord will take away thy Master from thee?" what would have been their reply? Surely each could have said: "I also know it, hold your peace"; the Lord would not leave them for ever without bidding them farewell. They were His friends and brethren as well as His disciples, and, according to His own testimony, He had made known to them "all things whatsoever" He had heard from the Father for them. Now the solemn moment has come, and He lifts His hands and blesses His disciples, even as Aaron, a type of the Messiah, had done of old when: "Stretching forth his hands to the people, he blessed them";² Jesus' last action was to bless His little flock—"He loved them unto the end."

¹ 4 Kings ii. *passim*.

² Lev. ix. 22.

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What words of blessing were pronounced? Did Jesus, our High Priest, before He passed into the Heavens utter the triple Aaronic blessing? It expresses so well all He would have wished to confer upon His disciples—all He still desired to impart to them, including the Easter gift of peace.

“The Lord bless thee and keep thee,
The Lord shew His face to thee and have mercy upon thee,
The Lord turn His countenance to thee and give thee peace.”¹

“Lifting up His hands, He blessed them.” How we should have loved to have been present on the Mount of Olives when Jesus ascended—to have received His blessing! Yet we have our share in it, for that blessing was rich in grace and mercy for the Church in all ages—for each individual member of the One Fold. Each can say with truth: “Those Divine hands were outstretched to bless even me.” Those uplifted hands of Jesus are the sign of that great sacrifice which He offered up upon the Cross and which He ever offers to the Father through the Holy Mass. They symbolise, too, that He ever liveth to make intercession for us, that He is able to save to the uttermost all who draw near to God through Him, that He is the Defender of His own.

“He blessed them.” This was His attitude the last time the disciples saw their Risen Lord. How often afterwards they thought of Him as, with uplifted and outstretched hands, He visibly blessed them for the last time! He departed from them in the act of blessing—the act of “One having authority.”

The Apostles saw those pierced hands, the sacrificial wounds still gloriously imprinted upon them. It was through His Passion and Death that Jesus, as Man, had purchased the power to bless humanity, the right to bestow upon His brethren that peace of which the angels of God sang over the fields of Bethlehem, that peace which the

¹ Num. vi. 25.

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Risen Saviour ever wished His disciples when He appeared to them. The wounds in His hands were the price of the peace He bestowed. Jesus' last attitude was one of benediction: He has never changed it: throughout all time He has a blessing for His Church. Lifting up His pierced hands, He blessed them; even so He blesses us from His Altar Throne under the uplifted sacramental species of Benediction. Reverently and assiduously let us endeavour to be present when that precious blessing is given.

When Jesus blessed His Apostles, they knew well that they were receiving the blessing of the Incarnate Son of God. They knew Him to be the promised Messiah, the Conqueror of Death and Hell. Gradually His true character had been revealed to them. Even during His human Life the Apostles had had glimpses of His Divinity, and Simon Peter had confessed Him to be "the Christ, the Son of the Living God." This light of faith had almost flickered out during the dark night of His Crucifixion, but on Easter Sunday He rekindled that light and never again was it to be extinguished. Individuals may fall away from the truth, but the Church of Christ ever confesses Him to be "the Son of the living God"—equal to the Father in power and majesty. The revelations made by the Risen Saviour during the Great Forty Days had enabled them to grasp something of the unspeakable majesty of His Person and the sublimity of His mission. Henceforth they spoke of Him as "the Lord Jesus."

In the very act of blessing "He departed from them: He was raised up. The Ascension was slow, no violent whirlwind agitated the air, no fiery chariot appeared—the Son of God rose by His own power. His feet left the earth and, sweetly smiling upon His disciples, His hands still outstretched, His lips pronouncing the words of benediction, He rose in solemn majesty. All was calm and peaceful. Though the Shechinah again covered the Mount of Olives, according to the prophetic vision, there was nothing to terrify the disciples. They saw Him go, watched Him entranced as slowly He rose higher and higher until at last

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“ a cloud received Him out of their sight.” Never would they forget the expression of unutterable love on His sacred features, those hands uplifted to bless, the majestic Ascension of Him whom the Heavens had received.

While the Blessed Mother of God, the Apostles and disciples still stand gazing up to Heaven, looking at the cloud which conceals Him from their sight, we will follow Him in spirit as He mounts to take possession of His kingdom. Earth recedes ; He speeds on His upward course accompanied by the angelic Hosts and the holy souls from Limbo, the first-fruits of His victory over Death. David in prophetic vision sang thus of the Messiah' Ascension : “ In thy strength, O Lord, the King shall joy . . . He asked life of Thee and Thou hast given Him length of days for ever and ever. . . . Glory and great beauty shalt Thou lay upon Him.”¹ “ Who shall ascend into the mountain of the Lord : or who shall stand in His holy Place ? ”

Then the Royal Psalmist goes on to describe the reception of the Victor of Death by the Angels of God, and the seer himself was among the millions of witnesses of that final triumph. He gives us the challenge of the cohorts who accompanied the Son of God : “ Lift up your gates, O ye princes, and be ye lifted up, O eternal gates : and the King of Glory shall enter in.” Then, as it were from within the Portals of Heaven, comes the question, which is only asked in order to elicit the enunciation of the Conqueror's majesty : “ Who is this King of Glory ? ” Instantly the first choir respond : “ The Lord who is strong and mighty ; the Lord mighty in battle.” Then again the words ring out : “ Lift up your gates, O ye princes, and be ye lifted up, O eternal gates, and the King of Glory shall enter in.” Like the thunder of many waters the choirs within ask once more : “ Who is this King of Glory ? ” and the eternal anthem re-echoes : “ The Lord of Hosts ; He is the King of Glory.”²

Thus Jesus enters into His kingdom ; He receives His reward as Man and as the Redeemer of mankind. The

¹ Ps. xx.

² Ps. xxiii.

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Eternal Father sets "Him on His right hand in the heavenly places, above all principality, and power, and virtue and dominion, and every name that is named not only in this world but also in that which is to come, and He hath subjected all things under His feet and made Him Head over all the Church."¹ He sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. In union with the saints and angels who prostrate themselves before His Throne *Venite adoremus*.

Thus the first Advent of Jesus has closed gloriously, and we worship Him seated on His throne of majesty surrounded not only by the nine choirs of adoring angels, as before the Incarnation, but also by the redeemed "out of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation."² "Many saints" that had slept in their graves—some throughout long ages—are present clothed again in the flesh, with glorious bodies like unto their Redeemer's. They sing the praises of God and of the Lamb "with a loud voice," saying: "The Lamb that was slain is worthy to receive power and divinity and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and benediction."³ What matters it now that, upon this earth, these saints "of whom the world was not worthy" were exiled and homeless, "wandering in deserts, in mountains, in dens, and in caves of the earth": that they "endured mockeries, stripes, bands, imprisonments"; that they were "stoned, cut asunder, tempted, put to death by the sword"?⁴ How glad they are now that in their little measure they were permitted to fill up those things that were wanting of the sufferings of Christ, to endure those trials which He left to His mystical Body, the Church, to suffer for love of Him! The more they suffered in this world for God, the greater is their joy in Heaven.

Jesus in His prayer for His disciples at the Last Supper had said: "Father, glorify Thy Son: glorify Thou me, O Father, with Thyself, with the glory which I had before

¹ Eph. i. 20.

² Apoc. v. 9.

³ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁴ Heb. xi. *passim*.

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the world was, with Thee.”¹ That petition is now answered. Our Lord sits upon His throne “that He may fill all things,” *i.e.* all *places* from the highest heaven to the lowest parts with His majesty and glory, or all *persons* with His gifts and graces.

Yet, although He sitteth thus at the right hand of God, He is still the Divine Companion of our Exile. He dwells in the soul of the baptized infant, of the lowliest Christian that possesses sanctifying grace, for “the greatness of His might feels no straits in narrow surroundings.” He whose voice rang out over the fields of Galilee, re-echoed in the Temple Cloisters, and died away on the breezes as He was carried up into Heaven while blessing His disciples still speaks, in space as in immensity, in time as in eternity to the souls of His own, both by Himself and by His ministers. As St. Augustine asks: “If the passing word of a man is heard at once by many, and wholly by each, is it incredible that the abiding Word of God should be everywhere at once?”

He ascended into Heaven, sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. The heavens having received Him, must retain Him “until the appointed time, which the Father hath put in His own power: until the times of the restitution of all things,” when God “will make all things new.” Let us rejoice with our Lord, who is now on His throne, congratulating Him on His great Glory, and striving to enter into the joy of our Lord. The willing captives whom He took up with Him have entered into that “fulness of joy” which ever characterises the Presence of God. Some day we hope to have a share in their blessedness; to attain to this there is but one way—that trodden by Him who is the Way, the Truth and the Life—the royal road of the cross.

Therefore when trials bear us down and sorrows press heavily, let us look up to our Risen Lord and beg Him to bestow upon us the blessed gift of final perseverance; the supernal prize is worth the effort of a fleeting moment,

¹ St. John xvii. 1.

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and provided we hold on day by day and rise promptly after each fall, we are sure of arriving at the goal of eternal life, where we shall be admitted among the redeemed and for evermore dwell with Him. Such is the great lesson taught us by the Ascension of Jesus. To every faithful disciple He has made the consoling promise: "Thou shalt follow Me hereafter."

SUMMARY FOR MEDITATION

First Prelude.—Represent to yourself our Risen Lord as, blessing His disciples, He slowly rises to the Heavens.

Second Prelude.—Ask that your conversation—*i.e.* your whole life—may be in Heaven, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. Pray for grace to act supernaturally.

First Point.—Jesus stands upon the summit of Olivet surrounded visibly by His Apostles and disciples. Mary His Mother is also present. Invisibly the angelic choirs and the souls from Limbo (some with glorified bodies) worship their King.

Second Point.—Jesus raises His pierced Hands, He blesses His disciples, and, as He does so, slowly rises in the air. A cloud receives Him out of their sight.

Third Point.—Jesus ascends, accompanied by His angels and saints. He takes His place as Man, at the right hand of the Father. Yet He still abides with His Church upon earth. We are called to follow Him.

Colloquy.—Thank our Lord for having opened the Kingdom of Heaven to all believers. Congratulate Him on His glorious victory. Praise Him for His love in abiding with His Church all her days, for abiding with you. Ask for the grace to live for the next world, to bear your trials in view of Heaven. Offer yourself to carry *to-day's* cross willingly and cheerfully. Invoke the intercession of those who accompanied Jesus on His Ascension. Pray for the Catholic Church, for her exaltation upon earth. Ask our Lord for His special blessing for you and yours.

XXVI

THE APPARITION OF TWO ANGELS TO THE DISCIPLES

AS Man, our Emmanuel left this earth: while His disciples, the ministering women and our Immaculate Mother fixed their eyes upon Him “a cloud”—the symbol of Heaven—“received Him out of their sight,” a fit chariot for Him who walks “upon the wings of the wind.” The angelic choirs and the redeemed are with Him. They praised their Redeemer who is so “exceedingly great,” who has “put on praise and beauty,” who is “clothed with light as with a garment,” who makes “His Angels spirits and His ministers a burning fire.”¹ He rose slowly above in that cloud after having used it as a symbol of His presence and majesty; and when He had disappeared His disciples for a time still saw the cloud which concealed Him.

Jesus left the world *publicly*, in presence of His accredited witnesses, who no longer ask Him: “Whither goest Thou?” They were privileged to see “the Son of man ascend up where He was before. Though “a cloud received Him out of their sight,” yet He ascended by His own power. As St. John Chrysostom remarks: “Christ is said to *have ascended* and also to have *been taken up*, and of these expressions used to describe His departure some are adapted to the conceptions of the disciples, some agreeable with the Divine Majesty.”

He had ascended to the Father, yet His disciples still remained gazing upwards, unable to turn away their eyes from the cloud, and when that disappeared likewise still

¹ Ps. ciii. *passim*.

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their eyes were fixed on the heavens. No human pen can describe their ecstasy of joy. They were unconscious of all around as they stood upon Mount Olivet, "gazing up to Heaven."

"And while they were beholding Him going up to Heaven, behold, two men stood by them in white garments." They were angels who had taken a human form, and were sent by their Lord with a parting message. These angels "*were standing by*" (as the original Greek reads), but the disciples did not see them at once,—their thoughts were fixed upon our Lord. Hence it was necessary for the Angels to speak in order to recall their thoughts to earth again. Of those present on the mountain, some certainly had seen an apparition of angels before; for example, our dear Lady and the ministering women, but we are not told that any of the Apostles or other disciples had up to this time ever been favoured with an angelic vision.

The angels appeared unexpectedly, as the word "behold" indicates, and they said: "Ye men of Galilee, why stand you looking up to Heaven? This Jesus, who is taken up from you into Heaven, shall so come, as you have seen Him going into Heaven."

"*Ye men of Galilee.*" With the exception of Judas Iscariot—the man of Kerioth—all our Lord's Apostles were Galileans. The greater number of His disciples were likewise natives of Galilee; for in that province His preaching had been most successful. This fact was well known in Judea, as we see from the fact that, when Peter entered the courtyard of the high priest's house after Jesus had been taken prisoner, the Apostle was suspected of being our Lord's disciple precisely because he was a Galilean—"They that stood by, said again to Peter: Surely thou art one of them, for thou art also a Galilean."¹ Again, when the Apostles and disciples spoke in different tongues on the day of Pentecost, their numerous hearers "were all amazed and wondered, saying: Behold, are not all these that speak Galileans?"²

¹ St. Mark xiv. 70.

² Acts ii. 7.

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“ *Why stand you looking up to Heaven?* ” The disciples knew that He must ascend to the Father ; His departure was not an unexpected thing. Still it was natural that those who had seen Jesus ascend, who had had, as it were, a glimpse of Heaven, should be oblivious for the time of earthly things. He whom, with all the impassioned ardour of their souls, they loved had ascended ; they could not do otherwise than look in the direction whither He had gone. They still seemed to catch the echoes of that blessing, to see His sacred form. The glory of the Lord had shone upon them and they were still dazzled, overpowered by His Majesty, wrapped in contemplation, pouring forth their souls’ adoration. “ *This Jesus* ” ; “ the same yesterday, to-day and for ever ”—for He cannot change—“ shall so come again,” that is to say, once more the clouds will be His chariot. Some sixty years later one of those who heard these Angelic messengers—St. John the Evangelist—when in the spirit on the Lord’s day in the Island of Patmos, had a wondrous vision. Recording it, he exclaims : “ Behold, He cometh with the clouds and every eye shall see Him.”¹ All the Synoptists record our Lord’s words concerning the day of judgment : “ Then they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of Heaven with much power and majesty,”² and He who will come in virtue of His own power is He who died to redeem mankind. He will come to gather His elect from the four quarters of the globe ; to take them with Him into His kingdom, to the place which He had prepared for them.

The Angels having delivered their royal message, the disciples “ returned to Jerusalem, from the mount, that is called Olivet, which is nigh Jerusalem, within a Sabbath-day’s journey.”³ In his Gospel St. Luke also says : “ They adoring went back into Jerusalem with great joy.” They adore ; they rejoice. They worship Him whom they now all firmly believe to be their Lord and their God. Henceforth, He is “ *the Lord Jesus,*” who sitteth at the right hand

¹ Apoc. i. 7.

² St. Matt. xxiv. 30.

³ Acts i. 12.

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of God. There is no selfishness in their souls. They think of Him and rejoice because their Divine Master has returned gloriously to the Father, having accomplished the work of man's Redemption. At the Last Supper Jesus had said to His Apostles : " If you loved Me, you would indeed be glad, because I go to the Father." ¹ Now that He has ascended the disciples experience " great joy," which shows that they had greatly increased in charity, that their Lord had the first place in their souls.

They rejoice, too, because the Ascension of Jesus confirmed their faith and hopes. They know now that He is indeed the Messias, who will come again and take them unto Himself, who will found an everlasting kingdom, who will indeed in the fullest, truest sense redeem Israel. It was in the firm faith in the Divinity that, a few days later in presence of implacable foes, " with great power did the Apostles give testimony to the Resurrection of Jesus Christ our Lord," ² and St. Peter boldly proclaimed that the heavens must retain Him " until the restitution of all things."

The disciples are full of joy, likewise, because His departure is the prelude to the coming of the Spirit in power, of Him in whose strength they are to go forth to conquer the whole world.

The disciples rejoice, too, in the ever-abiding though invisible presence of their Risen Lord. Even before Pentecost, from their intercourse with Jesus during the Great Forty Days, they have been prepared for something higher than His bodily presence. Their mode of worship has become more spiritual ; they are prepared to adore Him not only in the Temple of His human Body, but everywhere " in spirit and in truth " in virtue of His Omnipresence.

While waiting for the descent of the Holy Ghost in obedience to their Lord's commands, they tarry in Jerusalem. There the Church of Christ is to receive her baptism of fire, and in preparation for this great event the disciples are found " always in the Temple praising and blessing

¹ St. John xiv. 28.

² Acts iv. 33.

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God." In that House of the Lord they join in the prayers and sacrifices, and all the hallowed rites now have a new meaning. But a few years and these rites will be abolished. Meanwhile Jew and Christian worship devoutly, side by side, in the Temple, that the former might be won over to faith in Jesus as the Messias.

What must have been the joy of the ever-blessed Mother of God? Of all the disciples present at the Ascension none could rise to the sublime heights of her exultation in God her Saviour. She had rejoiced in Him after the Incarnation, at His Birth and when she nursed Her Babe. She had ever taken a larger part than all others in His joys and sorrows: her knowledge of Him was so much deeper than theirs. She had profited by every grace bestowed upon her. When Jesus was crucified, Mary His Mother stood by His cross. She suffered then more than all the Apostles and disciples. Hence it was fitting that the Queen of Martyrs should rejoice in God her Saviour more than all His disciples. Torrents of supernatural joy inundated her pure soul when she saw her Jesus rise in the air and ascend to take possession of His eternal throne. The joy of the Son was the joy of His Mother. *Consummatum est*, the last act of His earthly life, the first of His glorious Life as Man are linked together in the Ascension. All the prophecies concerning that life upon earth have been fulfilled to the last iota. Let us congratulate our Blessed Mother and implore her intercession.

St. Peter has seen his Lord depart, and he too rejoices, for none of the Apostles realised more fully than he did how expedient it was that Jesus should ascend. St. Peter's faith is strong as a rock. He is prepared to brave all dangers for the love of His Master and is strong in His might.

St. John, the beloved disciple, without a pang of regret sees His Lord ascend. Never again will he lean upon His Lord's bosom. Nevertheless, the Evangelist will have as close a union with Him as ever. In the Holy Eucharist Jesus will be the life and the food of his soul. There the

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Risen Lord will dwell, as in His temple, coming in to him and supping with him. St. Philip and St. Thomas now know the way to the Father, concerning which they enquired at the Last Supper. St. Bartholomew has seen the angels descending from the Son of man to give the disciples their Lord's message. St. Andrew, ever unselfish, rejoices that his loved Master has ascended to the Father. Without temerity, we may presume that Peter, James, and John thought of the glorious vision of the Transfiguration, and rejoiced that the Passion, which had to be accomplished in Jerusalem, was over. All the Apostles were ready for their great work, the moment their Lord wills them to go forth as His heralds and messengers.

Having returned from Olivet while waiting for the promise of the Father, all the disciples were persevering with one mind in prayer with the women, and Mary the Mother of Jesus, and His brethren. They were always in the Temple at the early morning and afternoon sacrifices, joining in the chant of the Psalms. "Always in the Temple, praising and blessing God"—having risen with Christ, they sought the things above. They commenced upon earth that service of praise and benediction which they now offer Him in Heaven and will offer Him throughout eternity—that blessed service of adoration which we ourselves hope to lay at His feet.

A new life was opening out before the Apostles ; their period of training was over, during which for three years Jesus Himself had taught and watched over them. That chapter of their lives has been closed. Never again would they follow the Prophet of Galilee throughout the length and breadth of Palestine. His Resurrection was the commencement of a brief period—the Great Forty Days—during which our Lord prepared them for the future. In the Sacred Scriptures the period of forty days is generally a time of solemn waiting for some issue, fraught with momentous consequences. For example, Moses waited for forty days before receiving the Law ; Elias passed forty days upon Mount Horeb before anointing Hazael to be

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king of Syria and Jehu, king of Israel. In the Life of our Lord upon earth, three times the period of forty days is mentioned. He was presented in the Temple when forty days old, and a like period was passed in the desert in fasting and prayer before commencing His public Life.

The Great Forty Days were followed by ten days of continual prayer. If we need to pray without ceasing at all times, there is a special call for earnest prayer before taking any important decisive step in life. Jesus Himself was wont to prepare His soul thus for the great events of His Life—thus we find Him spending forty days in prayer and solitude before commencing His public ministry. Before choosing the Twelve Apostles He also spent the night in prayer, and the last hours before His Passion were passed in wrestling with God in prayer. How many other precious lessons are contained in the narration of the Ascension of our Lord into Heaven! We will dwell briefly upon a few of them, since the Scriptures were written for our spiritual instruction.

“ A cloud received Him out of their sight.” Henceforth Jesus was with them, not by His Bodily presence in space, but by His Omnipresence in Infinity. In like manner, He is ever near us; we can invoke Him in all places. Especially is He near us in the Holy Eucharist: under the sacramental species, which like the Ascension cloud both conceal and reveal His presence, we can always find our Risen Lord. There are other clouds that conceal His Divine Presence. These may take the form of trials—temporal or spiritual—yet whatever be our sorrows Jesus keeps His blessed promise. He is with us all days, upholding us by His grace, consoling us in His love. It must needs be that a cloud should receive the Risen Saviour from our sight, since in our present condition we could not bear the effulgence of His glory. So, for the moment, we are well content to worship our hidden God and Saviour under whatever “ form ” or “ cloud ” He manifests Himself, even as Mary, His Immaculate Mother, worshipped Him when He became Incarnate and dwelt within her, and when He made the clouds His chariot on

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Ascension Day. "He cometh with clouds" during the time of our pilgrimage on earth. Be it ours to welcome Him, to pierce the cloud by faith, saying with all the energy of our love, "It is the Lord. Come, Lord Jesus!"

"*Why stand you looking up to Heaven?*" Alas, to so many of the denizens of the earth the angels of God might more fittingly ask: "Why look you never up to Heaven?" To stand firm looking up to Heaven, fixing the eyes of the soul upon the spiritual side of human events, should be the attitude of every Christian. Yet this frame of mind is not easy to acquire, for it presupposes great virtue. Only by prayer and constant, earnest effort can we despise the testimony of our senses and look to the inner meaning of everyday duties. To see, for example, the loving hand of God in a crushing bereavement; a means of acquiring humility in some cruel slander; a stepping-stone to detachment in some great pecuniary loss requires a true interior spirit, the habit of seeking the things that are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God." Yet, surely, this attitude of soul—and this only—befits those who are "risen with Christ"!

"*This Jesus . . . shall come as you have seen Him going into Heaven.*" This message from our King was for all time; it was not simply for the disciples—like the command to remain in Jerusalem until the Descent of the Paraclete. We were not present when Jesus ascended into the Heavens, yet we have our share in His parting blessing and in the promise made by His messengers. *This same Jesus* shall so come. We must never think of Him as changed in His disposition towards men because He has entered into His Glory. Joseph, the son of Jacob, still loved his brother tenderly, even though he held such a high position at Pharaoh's court and had been sold into slavery by them. How much more will Jesus, of whom the patriarch was the type, love, pardon and provide for those whom He deigns to call His brethren? His elevation to the throne of His Father has not changed His attitude towards His own; He is gone before to prepare a place for them. Some day

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He will fulfil His blessed promise : " I will come again and will take you to Myself, that where I am you also shall be." ¹

Our Risen Saviour comes again whenever the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is offered. Each Mass, each Communion is a fresh Epiphany of the Risen Saviour. He comes also to take each soul at the hour of death, and blessed indeed are those whose purity is such that He can at once take them unto Himself, where He is in His Heavenly Kingdom. At the last day, He " cometh with clouds " : all mankind will be gathered before Him. How absolutely insignificant all earthly things will look then ! How vividly we shall realise then that earth was never intended to be a finality for immortal souls created to the image of God. We abandon instantly all our worldly possessions when our lives are in danger, because we realise that earth's baubles are of no value to the dead, that life is a far greater good. Let us endeavour to be as wise as regards the things of eternity, and to live up to our belief that terrestrial things are unworthy of the love of a soul that was created by God for Himself. Detachment from the things of earth is one of the great lessons which the Ascension of our Lord brings home to us.

The disciples returned to Jerusalem *with great joy*. Shall not we enter also into their joy ? Christians have many tribulations in this world, but they have far more reason for rejoicing than for sorrowing. Jesus, our Master, has fully paid the price of our Redemption ; He has opened the Kingdom of Heaven to all believers—to all who will profit by His Redemption. Now He enjoys His reward as Man. Never can He suffer again. From His throne in Heaven He watches over, guides and governs His Church. In Heaven, He is our great High Priest. Joy befits the Christian to whom all things work together for good : a pessimistic frame of mind is unworthy of those who serve the Lord Jesus. Peace and joy are the two great virtues proper to the holy season of Easter, proper to the whole life of Christ's disciples. He is risen, He dieth no more,

¹ St. John xiv. 3.

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“ death hath now no more dominion over Him.” Hence the motives for rejoicing are ever present ; if we are faithful to our Risen Lord our joy may also be full, according to His promise. If “ the noble army of martyrs ” went to their death singing God’s praises, endued with the same strength, we can carry our little crosses with a light heart and thus glorify God.

After the Ascension, the disciples, while waiting for the coming of the Holy Ghost, were “ always in the Temple praising and blessing God.” We have passed a few moments upon the Mount of Olives. We have contemplated our Risen Lord ascending into Heaven, and learned some precious lessons from this mystery. What fruit should these lessons bring forth in our daily lives ? A deeper love, a firmer faith, greater detachment in the use of earthly things. These three virtues will lead us to imitate our Immaculate Mother and the disciples by leading a life of praise. Like them we shall be continually in the Temple, if possible, daily at Holy Mass—“ praising and blessing God,” offering the Divine Victim for this great end which is also the one reason of our existence. As Saint Ignatius of Loyola says in his *Spiritual Exercises* : “ Man was created to know, love, and serve God, and by so doing save his own soul.” The act of praise pre-eminently befits a creature whose existence has for object the glory of God, who “ made all things for Himself.”

SUMMARY FOR MEDITATION

First Prelude.—Contemplate the disciples standing gazing up to Heaven. See the two angels as they approach and question them. Listen to their words.

Second Prelude.—Pray for grace to live with our thoughts fixed upon Heaven and our Risen Lord.

First Point.—The cloud which conceals Jesus slowly rises in the air and finally disappears. The disciples cannot take their eyes from the place whence He rose. Two angels stand by them, at first unperceived.

The Apparition of two Angels

Second Point.—The angels address the disciples; they deliver their King's message, that He will so come again upon the clouds of Heaven.

Third Point.—The disciples return to Jerusalem with great joy. They are henceforth continually in the Temple "praising and blessing God." We should learn from this mystery to live for the world to come, to worship Jesus under whatever cloud He may conceal Himself, to rejoice in the Lord, ever praising and blessing Him in His Temple.

Colloquy.—Pray for grace to lead a supernatural life, to think oftener of our Lord on His throne in Heaven. Pray that you may always profit by the visitations and apparitions of our Lord to your soul. Ask that you may lead an unselfish life, ever rejoicing in the Lord, praising and blessing Him, especially in the dark hours of sorrow. Adore your Risen Saviour, and give yourself wholly to Him. Pray for those whose thoughts are all centred upon earth.

XXVII

THE MINISTERING WOMEN

(I)

WE have seen how the Apostles, the disciples, our blessed Lady and the holy women returned to Jerusalem—to the upper room—after Jesus had returned to the Father, and how full of joy, “praising and blessing God,” they were continually in the Temple. St. Luke also tells us, after enumerating the Apostles, that “All these were persevering in prayer with the women, and Mary, the Mother of Jesus, and with His brethren.”¹ Now we know that when Peter rose up “in the midst of the brethren” to propose the election of a successor to Judas that “the number of persons together was about one hundred and twenty.”² In addition to those mentioned above, it is probable there were some—if not all—of the seventy-two disciples whom Jesus had previously sent forth to evangelise.

The ministering women come greatly to the fore during the time of our Lord’s Passion and the Great Forty Days. They have come before us individually and collectively in the accounts of the apparitions of our Risen Lord. We will now examine the subject more closely and see what we can gather concerning them from the various allusions to their person and ministrations in the four Gospels and in the Acts of the Apostles, for the Evangelists are mutually complementary, and the Acts forms the sequence to the four sacred narratives which constitute but one Gospel story.

What do we know of the ministering women as a company? What do we know of them individually? How

¹ Acts i. 14.

² *Ibid.*, 15.

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far were different ages, types and social grades represented? In what did their ministrations consist? What were the determining motives which led them to follow the Prophet of Galilee? Here we have five questions which open up as many lines of study. Let us see how far we can answer them from the pages of Holy Writ and our knowledge of Jewish customs.

1. *What do we know of the ministering women as a company?* The first reference to them *collectively* is found in St. Luke's Gospel where, after the Evangelist has related the conversion of the sinful woman—who is generally identified with St. Mary Magdalene,—he goes on to describe our Lord's second journey through Galilee, which He made some time before the third Pasch of His Public Life. St. Luke writes: "It came to pass afterwards, that He travelled through the cities and towns, preaching and evangelising the kingdom of God, and the Twelve with Him. And certain women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities—*Mary* who is called *Magdalene*, out of whom seven devils were gone forth, and *Joanna*, the wife of Chusa, Herod's steward, and *Susanna*, and *many others* who ministered unto Him of their substance."¹ The same Evangelist records that when Jesus was agonising on the Cross, "All His acquaintance (*i.e.* male friends) and the women that had followed Him from Galilee stood afar off beholding these things,"² and likewise he refers to them in connection with the Passion, when he tells us that "the women that were come with Him from Galilee, following after (*sc.* the dead Body of Jesus), saw the sepulchre and how His Body was laid. And returning they prepared spices and ointments."

St. John has no reference to the ministering women *as a band* until he speaks of Mary of Cleophas and Mary Magdalene standing with our Lady "by the Cross of Jesus." St. Mark and St. Matthew both allude to the women who accompanied our Lord on His journey. These passages are almost identical, so it will suffice to quote one. Speak-

¹ St. Luke viii. 1.

Ibid., xxiii. 49.

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ing of the Crucifixion, St. Mark says: "There were also women looking on afar off, among whom was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the Less and of Joseph, and Salome, *who also, when He was in Galilee, followed Him and ministered to Him, and many other women that came up with Him to Jerusalem.*"¹ Here the Evangelist appears to distinguish between the ministering women and those women who had simply come up to keep the Pasch. The Synoptists inform us that Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome "bought sweet spices" to anoint the dead body of their Lord, and St. Luke relates how, after the apparition of the angels, "Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary of James and the other women that were with them told these things to the Apostles, and these words seemed to them as idle tales, and they did not believe them."²

This Evangelist also records what the disciples of Emmaus told our Lord, who was walking with them "in another shape," concerning the women of their "company." The expression, "*certain women of our company,*" proves that these devoted female disciples had a distinct *status* among the Apostles, as a band of fellow-workers.

It is thus we find them during the days of waiting for the coming of the Paraclete: the followers of Jesus would not have been complete without the blessed Mother of God and the ministering women. From the Gospel narratives it is clear that they followed Jesus when He journeyed about Galilee, came up to Jerusalem with Him, were with Him "afar off" during His Passion, followed Him to the grave, prepared ointments to embalm His dead Body, were first at the Sepulchre on Easter morning, saw the angelic messengers and also our Lord Himself, and that they were the first earthly heralds of the Resurrection of their Lord. Thus the devoted band of ministering women served their Divine Master in life and death and after His Resurrection.

2. But what do we know of them individually? Very few names are given—*Mary Magdalene, Mary of Cleophas, Salome, Joanna* and *Susanna* are mentioned as belonging

¹ St. Mark xv. 40.

² St. Luke xxiv. 10.

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to the "company," and among those who gave hospitality to Christ and His Apostles we also find *Martha of Bethania*, who "received Him into her house," and *Mary, the mother of John Mark*, in whose house Jesus celebrated the Holy Eucharist and also appeared to His disciples after His Resurrection. It will be interesting and instructive to summarise briefly what we are told of these seven devoted women—the loyal friends and disciples of the Lord Jesus, the precursors of those thousands of women who, in all ages of the Catholic Church, have ministered and still minister to Him in manifold ways.

Of these holy women St. Mary Magdalene is the best known. The touching story of her conversion is recorded by St. Luke, who relates how she came to our Lord and anointed His feet with precious ointment and shed tears over them in the house of Simon the Pharisee. The proud Pharisee was scandalised at our Lord's allowing her to come near and to touch Him, and on account of His condescension in so doing Simon judged Jesus to be no prophet. Whereupon Jesus related the parable of the two debtors, applied it to Simon and the sinful women, and defending the humble, penitent Mary Magdalene, said: "Many sins are forgiven her because she hath loved much."¹

From St. Luke's words we gather that Jesus had delivered her from seven devils. She then appears to have joined the band of ministering women. Her name, Magdalene, is derived from Magdala, a town or castle of Galilee on the western shore of the lake about a mile above Tiberias. Bethania was her native town, and there Lazarus, her brother, and Martha, her elder sister, lived. They were a wealthy family, for only the rich could afford to buy "ointment of right spikenard of great price," such as Mary Magdalene twice poured out over our Lord. Moreover, the home at Bethania was always open to Jesus, His blessed Mother, and His disciples. St. John tells us that "Jesus loved Martha, and her sister Mary and Lazarus." When Jesus deigned to visit His "friends"

¹ St. Luke vii. 47.

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in Bethania on one occasion we are told that Mary Magdalene sat at His feet listening eagerly to His Divine teaching. He praised her for this earnest desire to learn spiritual truths, and said: "Mary hath chosen the best part, which shall not be taken from her."¹ Mary had chosen the part of meditation on divine truths. She was nourishing her soul with the words of her Lord, and this sweet contemplation was a source of strength and happiness. It inundated her soul with joy, such as she had never experienced in the days when she sought happiness in wealth and human love. This "best part" was indeed a foretaste of the Beatific Vision, which "shall not be taken away"; for eternally the saints will see the King in His beauty. St. Mary Magdalene always comes before us as a generous, ardent, contemplative soul. To the Lord, who had raised her from the depths of sin, cast forth seven devils out of her, admitted her to His intimacy and that of His Mother, allowed her to minister to Him, to sit at His feet—to this Lord and Saviour, she gave the whole wealth of her generous love and devotedness.

Therefore, as we should expect from such a noble nature, she gave herself unreservedly to the service of Jesus. Every fresh grace and blessing received was an incentive to deeper love and greater devotedness. How could she ever do enough for Him who had pardoned her and restored her brother Lazarus to life? We are familiar with the exquisite narratives of the raising of Lazarus, the banquet at which he was present afterwards, when Mary again anointed Jesus—this time for His burial. On the occasion of this second anointing St. Mark tells us: "There were some that had indignation within themselves." Judas was the first to murmur, but some, if not all of the disciples, shared his sentiments and condemned Mary's generosity, saying: "To what purpose is this waste? For this might have been sold for much and given to the poor."² Once again Jesus, "who loved Mary," defended her. He rebuked His disciples, saying: "Why do you

¹ St. Luke x. 42.

² St. Matt. xxvi. 8.

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trouble this woman, for she hath wrought a good work upon Me? For the poor you have always with you, but Me you have not always." Then, prefacing His words with a solemn asseveration, Jesus added: "Amen, I say to you, wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, that also which she hath done, shall be told for a memory of her." So it has come to pass, for all the Evangelists record this proof of Mary's devoted love for Jesus.

The next time we hear of St. Mary Magdalene she is with the blessed Mother of Sorrows on Calvary at the feet of Jesus, there where she first obtained the forgiveness of her sins. She watched by the Cross until Jesus expired, then, having followed Him to the grave, she sat with Mary of Cleophas "over against the sepulchre." There we find her again at daybreak on Easter Day—the first of the band to reach the garden. Having seen that the tomb was empty, she hastened to tell Peter and John, and when she returned to the sepulchre, Jesus appeared to her first of all (with the exception of His blessed Mother). He sent her as the herald of the Resurrection, bidding her tell His brethren that He must ascend to His Father and their Father, to His God and their God.

Once more this ardent lover of Jesus is mentioned, and the incident is in perfect harmony with her character; we find her returning to Jerusalem with great joy, continually praising and blessing God in the Temple, persevering in prayer with Mary the Mother of Jesus, with His brethren, with the Apostles and the other ministering women. Such is the life-story of St. Mary Magdalene, the one whom Jesus loved, and as we think of her passionate love, her devoted self-sacrifice and courage, we feel she deserves her place at the head of the ministering women, for, by the express will of her Lord, Mary Magdalene's praise "is in the gospel through all the churches,"¹ and will be known throughout eternity as the one whom "Jesus loved," and the penitent who loved Him much in return because many sins had been forgiven her. Blessed St. Mary Magdalene, obtain for us

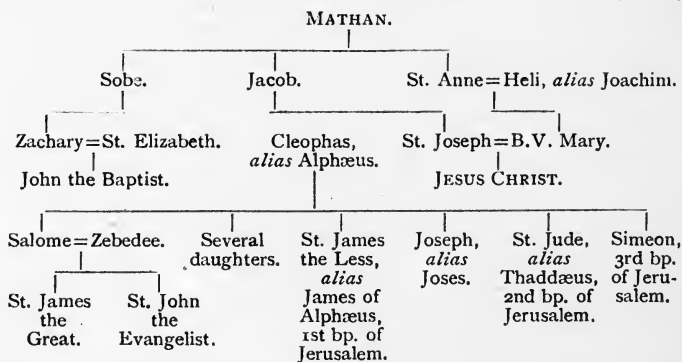
¹ 2 Cor. viii. 18.

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from thy Lord and ours something of thy burning love for Jesus and His holy Mother with whom thou wert so familiar and to whom thou wert a consolation on Mount Calvary!

We now turn to another familiar member of the company of holy women—Mary, wife of Cleophas, or better Clophas, sometimes referred to as “Mary of James” and “Mary of Joseph”—James and Joseph being two of her sons. James the Less and Joseph are with others spoken of as the Lord’s “brethren.” The genealogical table given below shows the probable relationship of those who are called in the Gospels “the brethren of Jesus.” * This table has the approbation of eminent commentators, since it embodies the ancient traditions of the Church on this subject. Eusebius of Cæsarea, who wrote at the beginning of the fourth century, states that Cleophas was the brother of St. Joseph, and gives Hegesippus as his authority. Therefore since Cleophas or Alphæus married a certain Mary, it follows that his wife was sister-in-law to St. Joseph and to Zachary, and thus related to our Lady by marriage, and aunt to St. John the Baptist, the greatest of the children of men. Further, Mary of Cleophas was the mother of Salome (the wife of Zebedee), of James the

* GENEALOGICAL TABLE



The Ministering Women

Less, Joseph or Joses, St. Jude or Thaddæus, and Simon, who succeeded James the Less as bishop of Jerusalem. Also James the Great and St. John the Evangelist were her grandsons. If we speak with veneration of the mothers of great men, of "A mother of a race of kings," what praise shall be meted out to Mary of Cleophas? Three of her sons were martyrs, of whom two were Apostles and one—Simon—became bishop of Jerusalem after the death of his brother James the Less, the first bishop of the Holy City. Also the two grandsons of Mary of Cleophas were Apostles, and one of these, St. James the Great, was the first Apostle who had the honour of shedding his blood for Christ.

It is generally believed that St. Joseph was much older than our blessed Lady, consequently his sister Mary must have been advanced in age when she joined the ranks of the ministering women—many years older than our Lady. In the lists of the Apostles James the Less is spoken of as "the son of Alphæus," and her other sons are mentioned and also her daughters in the narrative of our Lord's second visit to Nazareth during His Public Life, when His fellow-citizens rejected Him. The Nazarenes could not bring themselves to accept Him as the Messiah. Had He not grown up among them from childhood, and worked among them as a carpenter? "So they wondered and said: How came this man by this wisdom and miracles? Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary, and His brethren James, and Joseph, and Simon, and Jude? And His sisters, are not they all with us? Whence therefore hath He all these things? And they were scandalised in His regard."¹

From this incident, we learn that by the "brethren" of Jesus, those who thus rejected Him understood the sons and daughters of Mary of Cleophas. Four sons are mentioned, and the expression "*all* with us" referring to her daughters must cover at least three, otherwise "*both*" would have been more appropriately employed. Accord-

¹ St. Matt. xiii. 54.

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ing to a Jewish custom, cousins and other relatives were styled "*brethren*." Thus Abraham, speaking to Lot, says "We are brethren,"¹ and Laban calls his nephew Jacob "my brother." We also learn from the passage quoted above that Alphæus or Cleophas lived with his family at Nazareth, and this explains why St. Joseph, after the return from Egypt, "dwelt in a city called Nazareth," since his brother, Cleophas, had his home there.

The first time Mary of Cleophas herself comes definitely forward is during the Passion of our Lord. Both St. Matthew and St. Mark speak of her as "Mary the mother of James (the Less) and of Joseph." St. John tells us that "there stood by the Cross of Jesus His Mother and His Mother's sister, Mary of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene." St. Luke includes her among the women who had followed Him from Galilee and who for a time, at least, stood "afar off." Therefore Mary of Cleophas was an eye-witness of the Crucifixion, and we also know that she followed Jesus to the grave, probably after having assisted our Lady in swathing the sacred Body. Then, when all was over and Mary Magdalene and Mary the Mother of Joseph had beheld where He was laid, "we find both these devoted women sitting over against the sepulchre" mourning for their beloved Master.

When that Great Sabbath was over, these two mourners, accompanied by Salome, were the first group that reached the garden. In our meditations on the apparition of the Angels and of our Lord to the holy women, we have seen how Mary of Cleophas was one of the heralds of the Resurrection, and naturally we conclude that she saw Christ ascend into Heaven and that afterwards she persevered in prayer with our blessed Lady and her companions and also with her sons and grandsons. We may also conjecture that her daughters were included among the "*many*" other women followers of Jesus, whom the Gospels do not name, but who are inscribed in the Lamb's book of life.

Therefore, we learn from all these references to Mary

¹ Gen. xiii. 8.

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of Cleophas that she loved our Lord truly, and was a faithful companion of the Mother of Sorrows and very intimate with Mary Magdalene, whom Jesus appears to have admitted into the inner circle of His brethren. The mother of so many great saints must herself have been a great saint and a noble woman, and this is proved by her having the courage to stand by our Lady on Mount Calvary and to witness the awful sufferings of Jesus. During the rest of her life, how the early Christians must have revered her, for had she not seen the Lord of Glory hanging on the tree of shame? Mary of Cleophas shares with Mary Magdalene the honour of having been the last of the holy women to leave the Cross and the grave and the first to visit the sepulchre on Easter morning. The young earnest penitent and the aged saint were united in their love of Jesus and Mary. How much Mary of Cleophas could relate of the childhood of Jesus and of His riper years! How often she had seen and conversed with Him, and Mary Magdalene would treasure up every detail and meditate upon them in her moments of prayer and solitude. These two loved the Lord, they spoke often of Him one to another, and "the Lord gave ear and heard it," and He fulfilled His promise: "They shall be My special possession."¹

Salome, the wife of Zebedee, the mother of James and John, appears to stand third on the roll of the ministering women. She was cousin to our Lady, and doubtless, on account of the priority of James and John among the Apostles, her name is mentioned oftener than that of her mother—Mary of Cleophas. Salome lived at Bethsaida, on the north-western shores of the Sea of Galilee and on the borders of the beautiful Plain of Gennesareth. Her husband, Zebedee, and his two sons were fishermen, and they worked in partnership with Simon Peter and Andrew, who were natives of Bethsaida also. Since Zebedee employed "hired men" we may conclude that he was in fairly comfortable circumstances, and also because Salome was able to minister to Jesus of her substance. As a

¹ Malach. iii. 16.

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fisherman's wife, Salome had a busy life, for, in addition to her household duties, she would supervise the curing of the fish. Doubtless her home was a simple fisherman's hut, over which vines were growing and around which the doves fluttered and cooed. When the wind lashed up the waters of the Lake—so celebrated for its sudden violent storms—Salome must have had many anxious hours, for her husband and her two sons were out with the fishing fleet in all weathers. In the time of our Lord, whole fleets of boats might have been seen upon the Lake. There were numerous boats crossing it in various directions, carrying passengers and goods. The fisheries employed thousands, and salting fish was an important and profitable industry. There were numerous towns dotted along the south and west coasts, and each town carried on a brisk trade. Consequently Zebedee and his family lived in the midst of a populous city, one in which Jesus had done so many mighty works—such that He Himself once said: "Woe to thee, Bethsaida. For if in Tyre and Sidon had been wrought the mighty works that have been wrought in you, they would have done penance long ago."¹

Salome was a true patriotic Jewess, one who longed for the coming of the Messianic Kingdom. Therefore she was glad when her sons became disciples of their celebrated kinsman, the Precursor of our Lord, whose burning words of exhortation re-echoed throughout all Israel from the Desert of Judea, whither all the country of Judea and all they of Jerusalem gathered round him confessing their sins and asking for the baptism of penance. When the Baptist pointed out Jesus as the Messiah and James and John, Peter and Andrew became His disciples, Salome must have rejoiced. Living as she did on the shores of the Lake around and across which He travelled so often, she heard of many of His great miracles: of the healing of the nobleman's son in Cana, of the first miraculous draught of fishes after which Jesus called her sons to follow Him. She could tell Christ's disciples, in later

¹ St. Luke x. 13.

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years, many incidents connected with our Lord's preaching in Galilee.

Salome and Zebedee appear to have made no objection when the Prophet of Galilee made choice of two of their sons ; they were glad to give their children to God, as glad as the two sons of Thunder were to follow Jesus. Shortly after the call of the Twelve, it is conjectured that Zebedee died, for during our Lord's second journey through Galilee Salome seems to have been ministering to Him and His Apostles, of whom so many were her own kinsmen. Just before the Passion, when the Galilean caravan was in the neighbourhood of Jericho, we find Salome presenting herself with her two sons and begging Jesus to grant her request. James and John also spoke for themselves—in true Oriental fashion, asking for a favourable answer in advance—they said : “ Master, we desire that whatsoever we shall ask, Thou wouldst do it for us ” : but He said to them : “ What would you that I should do for you ? ” Then they replied : “ Grant to us that we may sit, one on Thy right hand, and the other on Thy left hand, in Thy glory.” Apparently Salome then presented the same petition in her own name, asking it as a personal favour : “ She saith to Him : Say that these my two sons may sit, the one on Thy right hand and the other on Thy left, in Thy Kingdom.” Manifestly, Salome believed at this time that Jesus was about to inaugurate a kingdom of temporal greatness, and as Christ had so recently promised that the Twelve should sit upon thrones “ judging the twelve tribes of Israel,” this fond mother desired to secure the highest places for her sons, presuming perhaps on their kinship with Jesus, according to the flesh.

How did Jesus answer this petition ? Unlike the other ten Apostles, who were “ much displeased with James and John,” Jesus showed no anger. He turned to the two, saying : “ You know not what you ask. Can you drink of the chalice that I shall drink ? They say to Him : We can,” though little did they realise what they undertook. Then Jesus promised James and John that they

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should indeed drink of His chalice, but that it was not in His power as Man to distribute the places of honour in His Kingdom : they were for those for whom the Father had prepared them.

Often as Salome had heard Jesus preach and declare that His Kingdom was from above, yet, like so many others of her race, she could not grasp the idea of a suffering Messiah. Calvary was destined to open her eyes to the truth. When she stood " afar off " with Mary Magdalene and Mary of Cleophas, her own mother, watching our Lord in His agony upon the cross, then she must have understood that Jesus would found no earthly kingdom. Like her two friends just mentioned, Salome was " last at the cross, first at the grave," and Easter morning brought her the wondrous and unexpected joy of an apparition of the Risen Saviour. We see her once more among the women and with the Mother of Jesus, pouring forth her soul in prayer in union with her two sons and her brothers, who were to have so great a part in founding the Kingdom of God upon earth, namely the Catholic Church.

Jesus accepted the ministrations and the alms of this humble fisherman's wife, who so gladly gave *her sons, her possessions and her personal service*. Only a few months later, when the head of James the Great fell beneath the sword of Herod, did Salome understand what she had really petitioned for her sons, and then—strong in the power of the Holy Ghost—both she and John could make the sacrifice of the first-born of their family whom the Lord Jesus had called so quickly to drink of His chalice and to sit upon the throne prepared for him by the Father.

SUMMARY FOR MEDITATION

First Prelude.—Contemplate the august assembly in the Cenacle and in the Temple praising God—the Apostles and disciples, Mary the Mother of Jesus, and the company of the ministering women.

Second Prelude.—Ask for the spirit of prayer, for grace to praise and bless God continually.

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First Point.—Call to mind what we know of the ministering women collectively. They ministered to Jesus and His Apostles assiduously of their time, service and substance. They were a recognised band among the disciples, who spoke of them as the “women of our company.”

Second Point.—Call to mind what we know of some individually, of St. Mary Magdalene ever prominent among them. Recall her conversion and subsequent devotedness to Jesus and His holy Mother.

Third Point.—Mary of Cleophas, the mother of a race of martyrs—her fidelity during the Passion, her reward on Easter morning. Reflect on the interesting incidents connected with Salome, the wife of Zebedee, the mother of James and John—her petition for her sons.

Colloquy.—Worship your Risen and ascended Saviour in union with those saints of the Cenacle who now see Him again face to face. Invoke their intercession. Pray for grace to live in a spirit of thanksgiving, to be ready to devote all you have and are to God's service. Beg our Lord to enlighten you when, like Salome, you know not what you ask. Offer yourself wholly to His service. Make *now* the offering of that which you foresee He may ask, and which will be a real sacrifice. Ask pardon for past cowardice, for having so often refused even to taste of His chalice.

XXVIII

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(II)

IN the few enumerations, which we have of the ministering women, we find twice the name of Joanna. St. Luke is the only Evangelist who speaks of her individually. He includes her among "the certain women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities" and who afterwards "ministered" to Jesus and His Apostles "of their substance." Joanna was "the wife of Chusa, Herod's steward," and we find her among the holy women who saw the Risen Saviour, since St. Luke, speaking of the apparition of the Angels at the Sepulchre, records that "it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary of James and the other women that were with them who told these things to the Apostles."

Therefore we may infer that Joanna, like Mary Cleophas, Mary Magdalene, and Salome, having accompanied Jesus in His journeys through Galilee, came with Him to Jerusalem, and was an eye-witness not only of His many mighty deeds in Galilee but also of the Triumphal Entry into the Holy City, of all the events of Holy Week, and that she was favoured with an apparition of our Lord on Easter morning. Since Joanna was the wife of Chusa, the royal steward of Herod Antipas, and the office of steward in those days was a very high position, it is probable that both Chusa and Joanna were of noble birth. There is a tradition that Chusa was the nobleman whose "son was sick at Capharnaum," and whom Jesus healed at a distance, saying: "Go thy way, thy son liveth." We know that this man "himself believed and his whole house." This miracle was worked early in the first year of our Lord's Public Ministry.

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A steward in the royal palace had the charge of all the household and of the king's purse: he made all the purchases and governed all the royal vassals. Chusa served "that fox," Herod Antipas, who had built himself a miniature Rome on the south-western side of the Sea of Galilee and named it Tiberias in honour of the emperor. It is probable that Chusa and Joanna lived in this new royal town—the capital of Herod's Tetrarchy. In the year A.D. 20 the foundations of a royal palace and fortifications were laid on a narrow strip of land sloping down to the waters of the Sea of Galilee about two miles long. Hot medicinal springs bubbled up over the beach, and baths were built close by. On the side of the Lake, a sea wall was built, strengthened with strong bastions and flanked by towers on either side. The Herods had a passion for building, and they built royally. "During our Lord's Public Ministry the city was in its first glory, with its Grecian colonnades, its Roman gates, its grand palace with gilded roof, wondrous candelabra, and walls painted with what seemed to the Jews idolatrous symbols; its synagogue, one of the finest in Galilee, and its spacious squares adorned with marble statues."¹ The city was too Roman to please the Jews, hence Herod had to exert himself to obtain citizens. Josephus relates how "Strangers came and inhabited this city; a great number of Galileans also, and many were forced by Herod to come thither out of the country belonging to him, and were by force compelled to be its inhabitants, some of them being persons of condition. He also collected poor people . . . some of them were not quite freemen." The king "made them free in great numbers," providing them with "very good houses at his own expense, on condition that they remained in the city."²

Since Chusa was the royal steward, he probably had a great part of the supervision of these new buildings. The

¹ *The Holy Land and the Bible*, by Cunningham Geikie, vol. ii. ch. xliii. p. 319.

² *Jos. Antiq.*, bk. xviii. ii. 3.

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work went on apace, and in seven years Herod's wish to possess a handsome capital was realised. The strict Jews, however, shunned this royal town, not only for its pagan practices, its Roman games and customs, but also because it was built upon an ancient cemetery, and hence to enter the town involved legal defilement. It is probable that Joanna did not dwell long in Tiberias, for it was only ready for habitation in A.D. 27, when Jesus was in His thirty-first year, and we find her among His followers during His second journey through Galilee.

For two years Joanna had the inestimable privilege of hearing His words and witnessing His miracles. He had healed her of some infirmity or disease, and if we accept the tradition which identifies the nobleman of Capharnaum with Chusa, then Jesus had preserved the life of her son when the boy was "at the point of death," and Joanna out of gratitude for these temporal benefits, as well as love and reverence for the great Prophet of Galilee, had followed in His train and ministered to Him and His Apostles of her substance. Joanna loved not only "in word and in tongue, but in deed and in truth." She had her reward even on earth when the Risen Lord appeared to her even before He manifested Himself to the Apostles, and made her His messenger. She had it even more fully when, at Pentecost after having persevered in prayer with her companions and the blessed Mother of Jesus, she received the gifts of the Holy Spirit and His precious indwelling in power.

One other name is given, and that only once—Susanna. She likewise was one of those who followed Jesus during His journey after He had restored her to health. Like Joanna, she must have had property, for she, too, ministered of her substance to the Lord Jesus. She is not mentioned by name in any of the incidents of the Passion and Resurrection, but we may conclude that she was one of the "many others" of whose names we have no earthly record, but which—better far—we believe to be inscribed in the Lamb's book of life.

We have exhausted the names recorded and given

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briefly what we could gather concerning these ministering women from the Scriptures. All these and "many others" travelled about with Jesus and His disciples. There are, however, two other women whose names deserve inclusion among the devoted band, namely Martha of Bethania and Mary, the mother of John Mark. These two do not appear to have *followed* Jesus during His travels, but they claimed the blessed privilege of receiving Him and providing for His needs whenever He came to Jerusalem. There seems to have been a standing agreement that, whenever the Lord and His followers visited the Holy City, there was always shelter and food ready for Him and His in the home of Martha. Identifying Mary Magdalene with Mary of Bethania, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, we find an exquisite narrative concerning them—one which portrays admirably the striking contrast presented by the characters of the two sisters and sets forth Martha as the devoted hostess of her Lord. The very first time her name is mentioned, it is in this capacity that she comes before us.

We owe the record of this touching, graphic pen-portrait to St. Luke. He writes: "Now it came to pass as they went (*sc.* on their journey to Jerusalem) that Jesus entered into a certain town, and a certain woman named Martha received Him into her house. And she had a sister, called Mary, who, sitting at the Lord's feet, heard His word. But Martha was busy about much serving, who stood and said: Lord, hast Thou no care that my sister hath left me alone to serve? speak to her therefore, that she help me. And the Lord answering said to her: Martha, Martha, thou art careful and art troubled about many things. But one thing is necessary. Mary hath chosen the best part, which shall not be taken away."¹

The certain town in question, or better "village," was "Bethania, the home of Mary and Martha," as St. John tells us. Martha was doubtless the elder sister, her name generally precedes that of her sister Mary, and also "*Martha*" received Him into *her house*. We seem to see

¹ St. Luke x. 38-42.

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the scene passing before our eyes—"Martha busy about much serving," Mary quietly drinking in every word of Jesus. St. Augustine, in his Homily on this incident, writes: "Martha, preparing to entertain her Lord, was occupied with much serving. Mary, her sister, chose rather to be nourished by Him. Martha was only anxious how she might entertain the Lord, Mary was only desirous to be entertained by Him. The one was occupied with many things, the other contemplating but One."¹

Mary's inaction appears to have irritated Martha, and, thinking it useless to address her sister, she went up somewhat impetuously to Jesus and asked Him to intervene. But He took Mary's part—as He ever seems to have done—and gently rebuked Martha for her excessive solicitude. This incident took place in the second year of our Lord's Ministry, about twelve months after Mary Magdalene's conversion. The next time we hear of Martha is when Lazarus sickened and died. As soon as he was taken ill, the two sisters sent word to Jesus, who was then going secretly through Perea. The ministering women were probably not with Him on this journey, which accounts for Mary Magdalene being at Bethania when her brother was taken ill.

St. John alone relates the sickness, death, and raising of Lazarus. We learn from him that "Jesus loved Martha and her sister Mary and Lazarus," that He spoke of them as His friends. Therefore, when their brother was so ill, the sisters simply sent to tell Jesus, asking nothing but leaving all to Him. "Lord, behold, he whom Thou lovest is sick." Jesus, however, tarried that He might do better, and only went to Bethania on the fourth day after Lazarus' death. When Jesus approached the house of mourning we are told that "Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was come went to meet Him, but Mary sat at home. Martha therefore said to Jesus: "Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. But I know that whatsoever Thou wilt ask of God, God will give it to Thee. Jesus saith to

¹ Hom. ciii.

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her : Thy brother shall rise again. Martha saith to Him : I know that he shall rise again at the last day. Jesus said to her : I am the resurrection and the life : he that believeth in Me, although he be dead, shall live, and every one that liveth and believeth in Me, shall not die for ever. Believest thou this ? She saith to Him : Yea, Lord, I have believed that Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God, who art come into the world."

Having made this splendid confession of faith, Martha hurried to tell Mary that Jesus had arrived. We are familiar with the majestic scene of the raising of Lazarus, when Martha's faith in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God, was so fully justified and confirmed. We have but one more allusion to Martha by name, and once again it is St. John who records the incident : " Jesus therefore, six days before the Pasch, came to Bethania, where Lazarus had been dead, whom Jesus raised to life. And they made Him a supper there, and Martha served and Lazarus was one of them that were at table with Him." It was on this occasion that Mary anointed Jesus for His burial. Thus the first and last time that Martha's name is mentioned it is as the hostess of Jesus.

We may safely conclude that Martha, ever active, was in Jerusalem on Good Friday, that she stood among the group afar off, helped to prepare the spices to embalm Jesus, and went to the sepulchre on Easter Day. Then, once more, we catch a glimpse of her—not busy for the Lord's service, but worshipping Him in the Temple and in the Cenacle, *persevering in prayer*, having her share in " *the best part*," chosen by Mary, her sister. What secrets St. Martha could reveal to us of the last few days of our Lord's life—days spent under her hospitable roof ! Surely, one of the joys of Heaven will be to learn from these favoured friends of Jesus, details concerning His life upon earth, so many things we have often longed to know about Him !

There was another hostess of Jesus, Mary, the mother of John Mark, the Evangelist, who some years later, " having

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become the attendant of holy Peter in Rome, had committed to him the task of setting forth the Gospel." ¹ This future Evangelist's mother was evidently a woman of means, for her house was situated upon Mount Sion—on the southern slope—and none but wealthy people could afford to dwell in that quarter—in Sion, the city of palaces. It was under her roof that Jesus ate the Paschal Supper, celebrated the Holy Eucharist, took farewell of His Apostles, and manifested Himself to them after He rose from the dead. Her house became the first Christian Church, for it was in the "upper room"—as St. Cyril of Jerusalem tells us—that the Holy Ghost descended upon the Apostles, and when the fire, plague, famine and the Roman battering-rams had done their worst, depopulated Jerusalem and levelled its splendid palaces and Temple to the ground, the house of Mary still stood erect on Sion, together with the seven synagogues—the only remains of a doomed fallen city.

Mary consecrated her *property* to the service of God: we do not read of her positively entertaining our Lord, but she placed her best room at His service—"a large dining-room furnished"—moreover, according to the Jewish custom, as the owner of the house, lent for the Paschal solemnity, Mary certainly provided all the utensils required and cooked for her guests. For these articles and services no payment was ever asked or accepted by a Jewish host. Generously did Jesus reward Mary by making her house one of the most sacred of earth's shrines, if not the most sacred, for what other spot can claim such hallowed memories as the Institution of the Holy Eucharist, the last discourse of Jesus to His disciples, the Manifestation of Jesus on and after Easter Day, and the Descent of the Holy Ghost? All the events recorded of her house are connected with prayer, and the last glimpse which we have of this venerable sanctuary in the Scriptures sounds the same note, for after St. Peter had been miraculously conducted out of prison by an angel he went at once to that home, which had been the

¹ St. Epiphanius.

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cradle of the Church—"to the house of Mary, the mother of John, who was surnamed Mark, where many were gathered together and praying."¹

Having given a brief synopsis of what we know of the holy women *collectively* and *individually*, let us now examine in what their ministrations consisted. In the East, there were two kinds of shelters provided for travellers: (1) Hostelries, or inns, which presupposed a host and hospitality for which the travellers paid, and of which we have an example in the inn to which the Good Samaritan took the wounded man. These inns were situated in the large centres of commerce, through which much merchandise passed. Moreover they provided very limited accommodation and were generally only patronised by the wealthy; (2) Caravanserais, which simply furnished a shelter. Those travellers who profited by these shelters—mostly pilgrims to Jerusalem and traders—purchased their own food and also prepared it themselves.

A caravanserai, or khan, consisted of a leewan or raised platform built round an open court. Covered alcoves opening on to the court were erected upon the leewan. Travellers could take possession of any empty alcove: their beasts were tethered in the court or in adjoining pens and stables. Natural caves were sometimes utilised for accommodating travellers, their goods and animals. As we know that Jesus and His followers were poor, that they lived on the alms of those to whom He preached, we are justified in concluding that they travelled like the poorest pilgrims.

Sometimes—as when Jesus desired to pass through Samaria on His last journey to Jerusalem—He had a numerous band of followers; Apostles and disciples, as well as the company of women. Then it would be necessary to send "messengers before His face" . . . "to prepare for Him" and His disciples. These messengers were probably some male followers and the company of ministering women, who would purchase the food required—barley bread, dried

¹ Acts xii. 12.

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fish, honey, dates, olive oil, fresh fruits in their season, and dried corn. The messengers, having secured a certain number of alcoves for the travellers, would then prepare the evening meal. They had to bring the necessary cooking utensils and vessels with them. These were few and common, for one large bowl sufficed for six or eight people, no plates were required. When the meal was over, the women put things in order. It was likewise part of their work to wash the travellers' clothes and mend them when necessary. The washing could only be done when the caravanserai was close to a stream. The women also filled the water-bottles, made of skin, ready for the next stage of their journey.

As none might enter Jerusalem with soiled garments, the pilgrims bound thither were obliged to carry a change of garments, and while our Lord was preaching in the villages occupied with His Father's business, the holy women, helped by some disciples, would look after the little luggage they carried with them. Travellers often slept in the open air, and the nights are cold in Palestine even in the spring and summer; therefore woollen wraps, which served as blankets, were required. For a band of even fifteen pilgrims there would be a fair amount of luggage, if we remember that kitchen utensils, changes of garments, water, rugs, and provisions had to be taken with them.

Gladly the ministering women performed these humble services for Jesus and His Apostles. On the road, they travelled apart from the Apostles, with perhaps one or two male disciples to protect them and render such services as were beyond their strength. When, at sunset, Jesus and the Apostles arrived at the khan the women hastened to serve the hot meal, taking their own only when the disciples had finished their repast. We can picture the scene, their joy on seeing Him arrive, their desolation when food was scarce in the neighbourhood, or when—as in years gone by—there was no room for the Son of God in the village inn or even in the caravanserai. Sometimes, generous Jews would invite Jesus and His companions into their homes,

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and then they ate what was set before them, but not infrequently they lacked the necessaries of life.

The ministering women had thrown in their lot with Jesus and His Apostles, and we know these women well enough to be sure that they gave Jesus the best they could procure for Him and His chosen followers. Who defrayed the cost of the food?—for the alcoves of the khan were rent free. The ministering women gave of their substance. Judas had the bag, but would give but sparingly, for “he was a thief,” and when we remember that for about two years the company of women ministered to Jesus, that none of the Apostles ever earned money in any way, we realise how, even living very frugally, the cost of food and clothing for so many was a considerable expense.

The Jews, however, were generous, and their hospitality often eked out the slender resources of Jesus’ followers. Sometimes the invitation was given from an unworthy motive—from curiosity or a desire to entrap Jesus in His words. Then He was treated with scant courtesy, as we see from our Lord’s words to the Pharisee, named Simon, who had invited Him to take a meal. Taking up the defence of Mary Magdalene, Jesus said to Simon: “Dost thou see this woman? I entered into thy house; thou gavest Me no water for My feet; but she with tears hath washed My feet, and with her hairs wiped them. Thou gavest Me no kiss, but she, since she came in, hath not ceased to kiss My feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint, but she with ointment hath anointed My feet.”¹ Notice how our Lord called attention to all the customary marks of deference given to an honoured guest—all of which the sinful woman had bestowed upon Him, while the proud Pharisee had refrained from giving these signs of respect.

How differently Jesus was received in the house of Peter. This Apostle’s mother-in-law, having been healed by our Lord of a fever, “arose and ministered to Him.” What a contrast, too, Zacchæus presents with Simon the Pharisee! The poor publican climbed a sycamore tree, hoping to get a

¹ St. Luke vii. 44.

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glimpse of the great Prophet of Galilee. Zacchæus would not have dared to invite Jesus to his table. But our Lord, looking up, saw Zacchæus clinging to the tree, "and said to him: Zacchæus, make haste and come down, for this day I must abide in thy house." The poor publican came down; he "received Him with great joy," and when the meal was ended, he expressed his intention of making a fourfold reparation for any injury he had done to his neighbour, and on that blessed day salvation came to the house of the poor publican who had entertained his Lord.

The band of ministering women were not wholly taken up with their labour of love for Jesus and His Apostles, for we know that they saw His wonderful miracles and heard His words. We find Him instructing Mary Magdalene in her own home, and the two Angels, who spoke to the women in the garden on Easter morning, reminded them of their Lord's predictions: "*Remember how He spoke unto you when He was yet in Galilee, saying: The Son of man must be delivered in the hands of sinful men and be crucified, and the third day rise again. And they remembered His words.*"¹ The Angels also referred to what Jesus had told them when they gave the women a message for Peter and the disciples: *cf.* "He goeth before you into Galilee, there you shall see Him, *as He told you.*"²

Thus these privileged women passed their days in hearing His words and ministering to Him. They shared the fatigues and privations of their Lord: the contempt and calumnies poured out against Him fell upon them also. Those who despised the Master would have less consideration for His poor, toiling followers. St. Matthew and St. Mary Magdalene were well known in Galilee, and Jesus' foes could point to them as types of the publicans and sinners of whom they accused Him of being the Friend. Yet they persevered in their devoted, arduous work—of all Christ's disciples, none were so uniformly true as the band of ministering women. They were united by their deep love of Jesus, however much they differed in age and social

¹ St. Luke xxiv. 6.

² St. Mark xvi. 7.

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grades, however diverse were the motives which determined them at the outset to follow Him. For all, love of God was the bed-rock motive, though the proximate determining causes were probably different in each case.

We find among the ranks of the holy women wives, mothers, aged widows and unmarried women, Mary of Cleophas, the grandmother of two of the Apostles, Mary Magdalene, full of youth and beauty, Mary the mother of Mark, and Salome were probably about the same age as our Lady—well on in the forties. Thus young and old gave their lives and work to Christ. These differences must also have existed among the "*many other women*" who followed Jesus. We do not know who they were, but they are known to Him whom they served so loyally and perseveringly.

Wives and mothers gave up their sons to His service gladly, as well as their toil and possessions. Aged widows consecrated the evening of their lives to Him to whom they owed all. The young followed Him faithfully, and of each it can be said, as He said of St. Mary Magdalene: "What she had, she hath done," for like the poor widow whom Jesus praised, they cast into the common purse to be spent on their Lord and Master all they had—even their whole living.

Some, like St. Mary Magdalene, were urged to show their gratitude to Jesus for all the graces—temporal and spiritual—that He had showered upon them. Mary of Cleophas and Salome came from a family in which the Messianic longings were deep and intense—they worked for the inauguration of the Kingdom. Joanna and Susanna gave back to God the bodily strength which He had restored. Martha of Bethania could never do enough to show her gratitude for all Jesus had done for her sister Mary, and also for the raising of Lazarus. All these, so different in age, social condition, character and determining motives, lived and worked harmoniously together, keeping "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," united by their love of Jesus.

Now these blessed saints of God "rest from their

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labours, and their works follow them ” ; for their example serves as an incentive to the Church in all ages. How many thousands of maidens, wives, mothers and widows have ministered to Jesus of their labours and substance in all ages and places—wherever the Gospel has penetrated ! Are we doing our part generously and constantly ? If so, let us not “ be weary in well-doing.” Are we idly waiting, complaining that “ no man hath hired us,” or *even not wishing to be hired ?* Then let us look around and examine the needs of our times, the dearth of Christian workers, and the supernatural motives—love of God and our neighbour—which should urge us to join the ranks of the ministering women—each in our sphere and measure.

If the work be arduous, the reward is great, and the joy of working for the Kingdom of God far surpasses all earthly happiness. What greater joy can we look forward to, after having sown in tears, than that of bringing our sheaves with joy to the Lord of the harvest ? What greater consolation can we experience here below in the midst of our work for God, than the encouragement which St. Paul holds out to all earnest workers ? Writing to his converts, the Apostle says : “ God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have showed toward His Name, in that ye have ministered to the saints and do minister.”¹

SUMMARY FOR MEDITATION

First Prelude.—Continue to contemplate the august assembly in the Cenacle, awaiting in prayer the coming of the Holy Ghost. Note the ministering women and our Immaculate Mother.

Second Prelude.—Pray for grace to minister to the Lord, to all who claim our services.

First Point.—Recall what we know of Joanna ; she was one whom Jesus had healed—the wife of Chusa, Herod’s steward, a woman of position and means, probably she lived in Herod’s palace in Tiberias.

¹ Heb. vi. 10.

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Second Point.—Mary of Bethania, the hostess of Jesus—her intercourse with Him when she entertained Him, when He raised her brother Lazarus; her confession of faith in His Divinity.

Third Point.—Mary, the mother of John Mark, likewise a hostess of Jesus. She consecrated her house to the service of the Lord. It became the first Christian Church.

Fourth Point.—How the holy women ministered to Christ by their constant lowly services and their alms. All women, rich or poor, old or young, can serve the Lord Christ, each in her sphere of influence and action.

Colloquy.—Worship our Lord in union with these saints now in Heaven. Thank Him for deigning to accept even your imperfect, humble services. Beg our Lord to make use of you, to send you just those whom you are specially fitted to help heavenward. Ask that you may see Jesus in all who claim your assistance in His Name. Ask that you may serve God constantly and generously. Invoke the intercession of these ministering women who are now with their Lord. Pray for Christian workers, especially for those who are tempted to be discouraged. Make an act of self-consecration to God.

**“ PERSEVERING IN PRAYER WITH MARY,
THE MOTHER OF JESUS.”**

BEFORE our dear Lord ascended into Heaven He said to His Apostles: “ I send the promise of My Father upon you, but *stay you in the city till you be endowed with power from on high.*” He likewise promised that they should “ *be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.*” Therefore the faithful followers of Jesus “ went back to Jerusalem with great joy, and they were continually in the Temple, praising and blessing God.”

We will fix our thoughts on the “ little flock ” so dear to the Master, that was gathered together within the hallowed precincts of the Cenacle, awaiting the coming of the Paraclete, who would teach them all truth, bring all things to their mind which Jesus had said to them, as well as convince the world “ of sin, of justice, and of judgment.” How many were gathered in that upper room? “ About one hundred and twenty,” and the assembly consisted of our Lady, the Eleven, some disciples—probably some of the seventy-two—and the ministering women with the Lord’s brethren. All these returned together from Mount Olivet on Ascension Day to make their united preparation for the Descent of the Spirit upon them in all His fulness. We may conclude that Jesus, who ever prayed Himself before doing any work of special importance, had bidden them prepare themselves by constant supplication for this great event.

St. Luke describes how the Apostles passed the ten days between the Ascension and Pentecost, and who were present in the Cenacle and in the Temple with them. He says: “ When they were entered in (*sc.* the Holy City) they went

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up into an upper room, where there remained Peter and John, James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James of Alphæus, and Simon Zelotes and Jude (the brother) of James. *All these* were persevering with one mind in prayer with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and His brethren.”¹

All these, i.e. the Apostles are mentioned by name, for they were the accredited witnesses to Jesus, and of these Simon Peter stands first as the Vicar of Christ. In all the four lists of the Apostles, St. Peter is always the first named. Besides the Apostles' names only one other is given, “Mary, the Mother of Jesus”—“*propter excellentiam, Mater Jesu distinguitur a ceteris*”—fittingly she, who excels all, is singled out from the rest. Apostles, disciples, ministering women were all together in that “uppermost” room, for it was under the roof, which like most Oriental houses was utilised as a garden.

Simon Peter reconciled to his Lord again—now so penitent and humble—he who loved more than all his brethren, prayed with all the fervour of his ardent soul. Near him we should doubtless have seen the beloved disciple, St. John, wrapped in contemplation of heavenly things. James the Great, one of “the sons of Thunder,” prayed for the coming of that Kingdom in power for which he so longed, for which ten years later he shed his blood, the first of the Apostles to give his life for the Gospel.²

St. Andrew, too, was praying with his companions. He had no need to ask, as when he saw Jesus for the first time: “Rabbi, where dwellest Thou?” for he had seen his Lord ascend. What stupendous events had happened since the day that Andrew had left the Baptist and followed Jesus! St. Philip remembered that day well, and as he prayed during those days of expectation, perhaps those words of Jesus called forth by his own question came back to him: “I go to the Father, and whatsoever you shall ask the Father in

¹ Acts i. 13.

² St. James the Great was executed in A.D. 44 by Herod Agrippa I.

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My Name, that will I do.”¹ Near to Philip we might have seen his tried friend Nathanael—the Israelite without guile to whom Jesus once said: “You shall see the heaven opened and the Angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.”² On Mount Olivet, Bartholomew—as he was called later—did see the heavens open to receive the Son of God, and also had a vision of angels. St. Matthew thanked God for his vocation, for having been called to follow Jesus upon earth, knowing that the Lord’s promise would surely be fulfilled: “Whither I go, thou canst not follow Me now, but thou shalt follow Me hereafter”;³ since all the Apostles were to be re-united to their Master after having mounted their respective Calvary.

St. Thomas firm in his faith, ready to die for his Lord and his God, was no longer separated from his fellow Apostles. St. James the Less was pre-eminently a man of prayer. Eusebius records the tradition handed down concerning him from the earliest times. This historian writes: “Hegesippus, who flourished nearest the days of the Apostles . . . gives the most accurate account of ‘James, the brother of the Lord.’ As there were many of this name, he was surnamed ‘the Just.’ . . . This Apostle was consecrated from his mother’s womb. He drank neither wine nor fermented liquors and abstained from animal food. . . . He was in the habit of entering the Temple alone, and was often found upon his bended knees, interceding for the forgiveness of the people, so that his knees became as hard as camel’s in consequence of his habitual supplication and kneeling before God.”⁴ How fervently did this holy Apostle pour forth his supplications in the Cenacle!

St. Jude, the son of Alphæus and the brother of St. James the Less, was also continually in prayer. He once said to Jesus: “Lord, how is it, that Thou wilt manifest Thyself to us, and not to the world?” But during the Great Forty Days a partial answer had been given when the Risen Saviour appeared only to His own. That ques-

¹ St. John xiv. 13.

² *Ibid.*, i. 51.

³ *Ibid.*, xiii. 36.

⁴ *Eccles. His.*, bk. ii. xxiii.

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tion would be more fully answered after the coming of the Paraclete, through whom Jesus would abide with them. St. Simon Zelotes, ardent like Simon Peter, formerly a member of a Jewish sect, whose characteristics were zeal for the purity of the Law and intolerance of a foreign yoke—he prayed for the outpouring of the Spirit with all the vehemence of his Messianic aspirations.

One familiar name is missing—Judas Iscariot, the traitor. Already forty days had passed since the son of perdition went to his own place. What an eternity that seemed! And now—after nearly two thousand years have sped on their course to eternity! From avarice and apostasy, good Lord, deliver us!

The enumeration of the Apostles in the Acts contains but eleven names. One was needed to take the traitor's place; Matthias was chosen by God for this office long before the lot fell upon him. For more than three years our Lord had been fitting Matthias for the dignity of an Apostle, though the disciple little knew it. Jesus often deals thus with souls whom He singles out for some special work in His Church. The call comes, and things which seemed so inexplicable and insignificant become clear as noonday and pregnant with meaning.

We may reasonably conjecture that at first Matthias was taken by surprise—overwhelmed by the honour conferred upon him. St. Peter explicitly laid down the conditions required of the candidates presented for election when he said: “Of these men who have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus came in and went out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day wherein He was taken up from us, one of these must be made a witness with us of His resurrection. And they appointed two, Joseph, called Barsabas, and Matthias . . . and the lot fell upon Matthias and he was numbered with the eleven.”¹ Thus the Apostolic College was again complete: Matthias passed from the ranks of the disciples to those of the Apostles. He had all the necessary quali-

¹ Acts i. 21.

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fications for being a witness to Jesus Christ, and during the retirement of those ten days of prayer, he had the opportunity of uniting his supplications with his brethren's, and of asking for the graces to fulfil his high office.

We should like to know the names of the disciples and "brethren" of Jesus who were associated with the Apostles, our Lady, and the holy women. We may conjecture that some, if not all, who were named deacons a little later were present. "Stephen, a man full of faith"; Philip, the future Evangelist of Samaria; Nicodemus, who had had the courage to profess his faith when he came forward to bury Jesus; Simeon, one of our Lord's brethren—the brother of James and Jude; John Mark, the son of Mary, were surely gathered together in that upper room.

We have spoken of the ministering women, of Mary Magdalene, Mary of Alphæus, Salome, Joanna, Susanna, Martha, and Mary, the mother of John Mark. "All these were persevering in prayer with Mary the Mother of Jesus." The prayers of the Apostles, the supplications of the disciples and of the holy women ascended to the throne of God, in union with those of the blessed Mother of God. Her fervent supplications for the outpouring of the spirit doubtless hastened the moment of His coming in power upon the disciples of Jesus.

Here the question obtrudes itself as to how far the Apostles and disciples realised what the Descent of the Holy Ghost really meant for them; how far they had understood their Master's words concerning the Paraclete. It is certain that the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity was not so clearly revealed in the Old Testament as in the New. Two reasons have been assigned for this ignorance of the existence of the Holy Ghost on the part of the Jews. (1) God did not make known explicitly this doctrine to them on account of their being so inclined to commit the sin of idolatry—they might have worshipped three gods instead of One God in Three Persons. (2) The explicit revelation of the Third Person of the Trinity, and His special attributes was, by the Will of God, reserved for the Christian era. We do find

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references to the Holy Spirit, as the subjoined texts prove : “The Spirit of God moved over the waters.”¹ Pharaoh said : “Can we find such another man, that is full of the spirit of God ?”² We find an allusion to “the Spirit of God rushing upon Balaam.”³ Job confesses : “The Spirit of God made me and the breath of the Almighty gave me life.”⁴ Ezechiel spoke “in a vision, by the Spirit of God.”⁵ and Joel prophesied that God would pour out His Spirit upon all flesh. Therefore, both in the Law and the Prophets, there are references to the Holy Ghost and prediction concerning Him and His work in the Church.

In the New Testament the Paraclete is mentioned more frequently, especially during the last part of our Lord’s Ministry. At the commencement of Jesus’ Public Life, the Evangelists refer to the Spirit descending upon Him, and driving Him into the desert. We read, too, in St. Luke’s Gospel of the Holy Ghost overshadowing our Lady, but we must remember that these words were penned by the Evangelists *after* they had received the baptism of the Spirit in power. Jesus spoke very plainly to His disciples—especially to the Twelve—concerning the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity—His attributes and special sphere of action. He told the Apostles that the Spirit of truth, the Paraclete “who proceedeth from the Father,” should come upon them in power ; that this Blessed Spirit would testify to the works of Jesus, call to the Apostles’ minds all things which He had taught them : guide them into all truth, abide with them for ever, inspire them when they were brought before kings and judges for their Lord’s sake, and convince the world of sin, justice, and judgment.⁶

All these truths and many others Jesus had explained to His disciples before He ascended. The question is : “How far did they understand Him ? He had “opened their intelligence after His Resurrection that they might grasp the necessity of His Passion in order to fulfil the Scriptures, but knowing how slow of heart they were, and

¹ Gen. i. 2. ² *Ibid.*, xli. 38. ³ Num. xxiv. 2. ⁴ Job xxxiii. 4.

⁵ Ezec. xi. 4.

⁶ See St. John xiv.—xvi. *passim*.

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that, even on Ascension Day, some disciples still hoped that He was about to inaugurate a temporal Messianic reign, we should not be astonished if the Apostles had not a very clear idea of what the Descent of the Spirit really signified, even while they were waiting and praying for His Advent. Jesus may have left to the Spirit the work of interpreting Himself and His work of sanctification in the soul. Again, among the one hundred and twenty disciples, there were doubtless some who understood far more concerning the Spirit than others, for even among the Apostles we cannot suppose that all their souls had attained to precisely the same degree of spiritual intelligence or insight and virtue—St. John, for example, was quicker in apprehending the truth of the Resurrection, the fact of our Lord's Presence by the Sea of Galilee than even St. Peter was, while we feel sure that Mary Magdalene had a greater spiritual receptivity than her sister Martha.

But, however much or little the Apostles and disciples realised concerning the stupendous unspeakable gift of the Spirit for whom they were so earnestly "with one mind" persevering in prayer, it is certain that there was one present in that august assembly who did fully realise the immensity of the boon craved, as far as any human creature could grasp its pricelessness, and that one was Mary the ever blessed Mother of Jesus, upon whom, at His Incarnation, the Holy Ghost had descended and, by whose overshadowing, this mystery had been accomplished. Mary "the Spouse of the Holy Ghost" knew something of His Power and Majesty. Our Lady being "full of grace," immaculate in her conception, and sinless in her life, had reached a degree of holiness which sinful mortals cannot even understand. She had seen the workings of the Spirit in Jesus, and her Divine Son had spoken of the Holy Ghost to her so often. She understood the Scriptures, and grasped the meaning of the prophecies concerning the Messiah and the outpouring of the Spirit upon the children of Israel. Mary, so "full of grace," was also full of the Holy Spirit, who had bestowed His precious gifts upon her.

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Therefore our Immaculate Mother was instructed concerning the Holy Ghost by the Scriptures, by her Son's words and example and by her own sweet experience of His indwelling in her pure soul.

Again, Mary had stood by the Cross on Good Friday. She had seen to what awful depths the malice of man could reach. She knew how weak the Apostles and disciples were, in spite of all their good desires and their loyal love of their Master. She understood more concerning the trials which awaited the Apostles and realised the superhuman responsibilities of their office, better even than they themselves did at this period of their lives, when the Holy Ghost had not yet come in power. Therefore Mary knew how much they needed the assistance of the Spirit, how He would transform them into saints and heroes of the Cross. Just because she knew all this so well, and on account of the excellence of the degree of holiness to which she had attained, her prayers rose up to the throne of Jesus, her Son, above those of the Apostles even—immeasurably more powerful—and drew down the Spirit from above.

In the book of Daniel we are told that to him and his three companions “God gave knowledge and understanding in every book and wisdom”; how much more must He have given to the Mother of the Word Incarnate? She could have voiced the sentiments of the prophet: “Blessed be the Name of the Lord from eternity and for evermore: for wisdom and fortitude are His. And He changeth times and ages: taketh away kingdoms and establisheth them, giveth wisdom to the wise and knowledge to them that have no understanding. He revealeth deep and hidden things, and knoweth what is in darkness: and light is with Him. To Thee, O God of our fathers, I give thanks, and I praise Thee: because Thou hast given me wisdom and strength.”¹

Because Daniel was a man of prayer and “of desires” the coming of the Messiah was hastened, may we not justly conclude that the earnest supplications and desires of the

¹ Dan. ii. 20.

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Queen of the Patriarchs, Prophets, and Apostles hastened the descent of the Holy Spirit? At the dawn of day during that period of waiting, the Apostles, the disciples, our Lady and the holy women might have been seen going into the Courts of the Lord to be present at the morning sacrifice: They joined in the prayers offered by the officiating priest, they prayed for the coming of the Kingdom of God in power, for no Jew ever omitted this petition, believing that no prayer reached the throne of God unless it contained a supplication concerning the Messianic Kingdom.

What a depth of meaning these prayers and psalms would have for our Lady and the disciples! How earnestly they recited the prayer which Jesus Himself had taught them: "Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy Name, Thy Kingdom come." How reverently did they chant the familiar response after each verse of the appointed psalm: "Thine is the Kingdom, the Power and the Glory, for evermore." It was customary to remain in the Temple Courts for private devotions, and—like our Catholic Churches—the synagogues were always open for private prayer. The Jews held that prayer was most powerful when offered in the Temple. Next in importance came that offered in the synagogues, and last those devotions performed at home.

Therefore Mary and our Lord's disciples were continually *in the Temple*, praising and blessing God. They returned there in the afternoon, when sacrifice and incense were offered again to the Lord, and doubtless they remained until sundown when the Temple gates were closed. Our dear Lady loved the Temple. There she had passed the days of her childhood. All the solemn services of the Mosaic ritual were familiar to her, and she had worked for the House of the Lord—embroidering hangings for the sanctuary and making vestments for the priests. Jesus had hallowed that Temple; it was there she had found Him after her three days' search "about His Father's business." He had finished it now and returned to His Father, and His Apostles were waiting for the Descent of the Spirit in order

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to carry on the work of evangelising the world, entrusted to them by Jesus. Every stone of the Lord's House was dear to Mary—for the Temple was the one place upon earth where sacrifice to Jehovah could be offered and that sacred Name pronounced.

The Apostles, too, loved the Temple in which from childhood they had prayed. There Jesus had worshipped God with them, there He had openly proclaimed Himself as the Messiah and worked many mighty miracles. If hallowed associations are ever helps to prayer, what must have been the impetus given to the devotion of the disciples by all the remembrances of their loved Lord and Master which the Temple recalled to them!

There they *persevered in prayer*, and perseverance implies continuing in spite of mental and bodily fatigue. They knew that for them at that time prayer was a duty, and that Jesus had once uttered a parable to teach them that “men ought always to pray and not to faint,” *i.e.* not to let themselves be overcome by fatigue. It is in this spirit that the Church sanctions vigils, for which, too, we have the authority of the Scriptures, our Lord's example, and the practice of the primitive Christians. Before, as after the coming of the Spirit, the Apostles gave themselves “continually to prayer.”

Praise and benediction, thanksgiving and adoration entered largely into the prayer of the disciples, and rightly so, for man's first duty is to glorify His Creator—to thank Him for all His benefits. We are too prone to commence our prayers with petitions for some personal need. These are good in their place, but should not habitually take first or second rank, reserved respectively for adoration and thanksgiving. Here, again, our Lady with her sublime Magnificat is an example for us.

The disciples were all “*of one mind.*” They were agreed upon earth touching what they would ask of the Father, and therefore, in accordance with His sacred promise, Jesus was present, invisibly, in the midst of them. They prayed in union with the intentions of Jesus. He longed to send the Spirit. He had ascended up on high and

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received gifts for men: the Spirit proceedeth from the Father and the Son, but even as the Father sent the Son, so Jesus sent the Spirit. But He willed that His disciples should pray for the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Therefore the Risen Saviour inspired the disciples to offer up the prayer which He had predetermined to answer.

It is thus that He deals with us, and therefore when we feel interiorly drawn to pray for some special intention, we may take this attraction as a sign that God wills us to pray for that object and that He will, *in His own time and way*, answer our humble persevering supplication. Even as the disciples prayed in union with Mary, so can we present our supplications by her pure hands, and thereby our prayers are more agreeable to the Divine Majesty and we are more surely heard and answered.

That band of faithful disciples of Jesus who united their prayers with those of Mary in the Cenacle have long since left this earth. Most of them suffered martyrdom for the Name of Jesus. Where are they now? "Continually in the Temple"—not made with hands—"praising and blessing God with Mary the Mother of Jesus and His brethren," that multitude of the redeemed who follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. In the Cenacle those blessed saints of God—the brethren of Jesus—began upon earth that occupation which was to be theirs throughout eternity. How this thought ennobles our devotions, how it should encourage us to persevere!

Blessed Mother of Jesus, holy Apostles, disciples and ministering woman, pray for us that we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ and one day join you in the heavenly Temple, there to praise and bless our God and the Lamb for all eternity.

SUMMARY FOR MEDITATION

First Prelude.—Contemplate the Apostles, disciples, holy women and our Lady praying in the Temple at the hour of incense. As the smoke of the incense rises before God, so their fervent prayers ascend even to His throne.

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Second Prelude.—Ask that the fruit of this meditation may be a greater esteem for prayer and a firm will to pray constantly.

First Point.—The Apostles—their special features, their fervour in prayer. The election of St. Matthias.

Second Point.—The Apostles, disciples, and holy women all persevered in prayer with Mary, the Mother of Jesus.

Third Point.—Mary understood better than “ all these ” the greatness of the favour for which they were praying. All the disciples were assiduous in attending the Temple services. We too should *persevere* “ *with one mind* in prayer ” with the Mother of Jesus and the saints in Heaven.

Colloquy.—Ask for the gift of the Holy Spirit in union with our Lady—*i.e.* through her intercession. Thank the Paraclete for all the gifts He has showered upon you. Beg for courage to persevere when prayer is difficult, for grace to realise that without God you can do nothing. Make an act of contrition for past omissions and negligences in prayer. Thank God for allowing you to approach Him so often and so freely by prayer. Invoke the prayers of those saints who prayed in the Cenacle for the coming of the Holy Ghost. Ask for a great devotion to the Paraclete, and that you may follow His inspirations with fidelity.

XXX

THE DAY OF ATONEMENT IN THE TEMPLE¹

WHEN Jesus rose from the grave, the work of our Redemption was accomplished. His Resurrection set the seal to the great sacrifice which He had offered up on Calvary, and proved that the Father had accepted His Son's Atonement. The Ascension was the complement of the Resurrection, for if earth is not a fitting dwelling for those who, having passed through the portals of death, have risen with glorified, spiritualised bodies, still less was it meet to be the abode of our Lord after His victory over the grave by His own intrinsic power. His work upon earth was accomplished. It was meet that He should ascend to receive His reward as Man, for all He had suffered in His human nature.

If He delayed forty days before ascending to the Father—of which He spoke as a present event even on Easter morning—it was that He might prove to His Apostles and disciples—"to chosen witnesses"—that He had really risen from the grave, complete the training and instruction of the Twelve, console, prepare, and strengthen them for fresh work under changed conditions.

Having accomplished these great objects, the Son of God returned to the Father—there "He sitteth at the right hand of God." In addition to the two reasons given above why this earth could not retain our Redeemer, we find three

¹ This chapter is introductory to the following one. The information and descriptions given herein are taken chiefly from the subjoined works: The Scriptures, Josephus' *Antiquities*, the *Jewish Encyclopedia*, Hastings' and Smith's *Dictionaries of the Bible*, Edersheim's *Temple and its Services*.



Photo Brogi.

A High Priest over the House of God.



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great motives for His Ascension. He ascended into Heaven (1) that He might be our High Priest "within the veil"; (2) in order to take His place there as Head of the whole Church—militant, suffering, and glorious; (3) that He might reign in Heaven as "the King of Glory."

In the Epistle to the Hebrews St. Paul lays great stress upon the eternal efficacious High-priesthood of our Lord. The whole work was written to prove the insufficiency of the Law to save or sanctify man, and that all its symbols were shadows of better things to come. "The sacrifices of the Old Testament were symbolical and typical. An outward observance without any real inward meaning is only a ceremony. But a rite which has a present spiritual meaning is a symbol; and if, besides, it also points to a future reality, conveying at the same time, by anticipation, the blessing that is yet to appear, it is a type. Thus the Old Testament sacrifices were not only symbols, nor yet merely predictions by fact (as prophecy is a prediction by word), but they already conveyed to the believing Israelite the blessing that was to flow from the future reality to which they pointed."¹ This "future reality" was the sacrifice of our Lord on the Cross, in virtue of which the true Israelite—looking beyond the type to that which it signified—obtained the remission of His sins through the Mosaic sacrifices, those shadows of good things to come," which could "never make the comers thereunto perfect."²

The Psalmist speaks of the King Messiah as "a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedech,"³ and St. Paul applied these words to our Lord when he tells us that Jesus is entered "within the veil" for us, "made a high priest for ever, according to the order of Melchisedech."⁴ That we may clearly grasp the meaning of these words, it is absolutely necessary that we should have some knowledge of the symbols and types by which our dear Lord's High-priesthood was prefigured. We will therefore examine the *position* of the Jewish High Priest, his *qualifications*, *con-*

¹ *The Temple*, &c., by Dr. Edersheim, ch. v. p. 106.

² Heb. x. 1.

³ Ps. cix. 4.

⁴ Heb. vi. 20.

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secration, vestments, and chief duties. Thus only can we obtain some faint conception of this stupendous mystery, and as St. Paul says, "hold fast the hope set before us"—that blessed hope which reveals to us, as a source of joy and strength, Jesus our "High Priest, holy, innocent, undefiled," who hath "entered into Heaven itself that He may appear now in the presence of God for us."¹

What then was the position or status of the high priest of Israel? He was "the priest" *par excellence*: the *Sacerdos magnus*, the "*princeps sacerdotum*" as the Vulgate gives his titles. In him was the fulness of the sacerdotal gifts, and, theoretically at least, of all judicial power, for originally, like Melchisedech, the high priest was both *king* and *pontiff*. He alone could offer the sin offering on the Day of Atonement for himself and his family, for the priests and for the people. In fact no simple priest could offer a sacrifice for himself, *i.e.* a sin or trespass offering, because the life of the victim was being offered in place of his own, and this offering could only be made by a Mediator—by one who stood between God and His guilty people to make "atonement" or "covering" for the sin of another.

By a kind of fiction of Jewish teachers the high priest's sins were supposed to be those of the people or of his family, in accordance with their doctrine and ideal—correct in its principle—that he who stood between God and the sinner must himself be free from sin and pleasing to God.

The Jews held that *all* sin, whether a deliberate transgression or a sin of omission, severed the bond of spiritual life which unites the soul with its Creator. "The soul that sinneth, the same shall die"²: these words embody a fundamental truth of both the Old and the New Testaments. God and man estranged by sin needed to be "set-at-one," and this atonement or "covering" was effected by sacrifices offered to God by the hands of a Mediator. In olden times, a man who had killed another or slaughtered an animal belonging to his neighbour had to "cover" his evil deed by "covering" the corpse with grain or gold

¹ Heb. ix. 24.

² Ezech. xviii. 20.

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according to his means. In some such way, sacrifices were taken as "covering up" the sin by making satisfaction for it. Of all, who could thus mediate between God and man, the high priest ranked first, and this because, theoretically, he himself was sanctified. Undoubtedly, in our Lord's times, the high priests had fallen far below this high standard, but this was partly due to the original law—by which a man held this dignity by lawful descent and for life—having been put on one side. It had become customary for the ruling princes, for their own political ends, to nominate those of the family of the high priest whom they chose, and to depose them again at their pleasure. Consequently unworthy men were often placed in this exalted office or obtained it by bribery.

What were the qualifications of the high priest? He must be of legitimate birth, of the family of Aaron, a son or brother of the preceding high priest and have no corporal defect or infirmity. It was necessary, too, that he should be a scholar and possess sufficient means to uphold the dignity of his office. Since he ought to excel all other priests in every respect, the priests had to contribute sufficient for this purpose, should he be poor or chance to lose his fortune. The age fixed was not less than twenty. He had to be carefully taught how to perform his sacred duties, and each year—just before the Day of Atonement—these instructions were renewed. His judicial duties consisted in presiding over the Council of the Sanhedrin which regulated all questions of worship and discipline. He also acted as judge in all cases of grave breaches of the Law of Moses committed by Jews. This shows the necessity of his being a man learned in the Law and in the Scriptures.

The consecration of the high priest was a very imposing ceremony. Originally, he was solemnly anointed. Oil was poured over his head and the sacred unction was made upon his forehead and eyes in the form of the Greek X. When the method of making this sacred oil of unction was lost, high priests were simply *invested*, but an *anointed* high priest was esteemed far higher than one who had

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simply been invested ; the former alone had the privilege of consulting Jehovah by means of the Urim and Thummim. The investiture, which lasted seven days, consisted in clothing him with the distinctive vestments of his office and the recitation of certain prayers, psalms, and benedictions, together with the ceremonial ablutions.

The priest's vestments, made of linen, comprised drawers, a seamless woven tunic, a long girdle in which all the symbolic sanctuary colours—white, blue, purple, and scarlet—were interwoven, and a turban or bonnet. The high priest's girdle also had golden threads woven in it and, instead of a turban, he wore a mitre with a golden plate. Besides these vestments, common to all priests, the high priest had his distinctive ones ; namely, the tunic of the Ephod, the Breast Plate, and the mitre. These were also wrought of linen of the sanctuary colours, which respectively signified purity, heaven, royalty and sacrifice. These four articles were known as " the golden vestments," to distinguish them from the pure white linen vestments, without a thread of another colour, which the pontiff wore on the Day of Atonement only.

The tunic of the Ephod was of dark blue linen woven throughout. It had no sleeves, and the hem of the skirt—which reached to the knees—was beautifully embroidered with blossoms of pomegranates in blue, purple, and scarlet. Between each blossom golden bells were suspended—seventy-two in number.

The Ephod consisted of two parts, somewhat like a short chasuble in shape. These two parts covered the breast and back and reached a little below the waist. They were held together upon the shoulders by two large onyx stones, set in gold. On these stones were engraved the names of the twelve tribes—six on each clasp. The golden girdle held it in its place. Over the Ephod the high priest wore the breastplate or " rational," which is described in the Scriptures as follows : " Moses made a rational with embroidered work, according to the work of the Ephod—of gold, violet, purple and scarlet twice dyed, and fine twisted

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linen. Four square, double, of the measure of a span. And he set four rows of precious stones in it. In the first row was a sardius, a topaz, an emerald. In the second a carbuncle, a sapphire, a jasper. In the third, a ligurius, an agate, and an amethyst. In the fourth, a chrysolite, an onyx, and a beryl, set and enclosed in gold by their rows. And the twelve stones were engraved with the names of the twelve tribes of Israel, each one with its several names.”¹

The rational was attached to the Ephod by means of little rings and golden chains. The high priest's head dress consisted of a mitre of blue linen swathes, arranged in the form of an inverted conical calyx (“like the calyx of the herb hyoscyamus,” as Josephus explains). Our Catholic bishop's mitre gives a good idea of the shape. Around these linen swathes were three golden crowns—these being an addition dating from the Asmonean period and signifying the union of the royal with the priestly power. In front of the mitre and fastened around it with “a violet (*sc.* blue) fillet,” was the golden plate or *Ziz*. This covered the pontiff's forehead, and upon it were engraved the words: “The Holy of the Lord.”² All these beautiful vestments were made “as the Lord had commanded Moses,”³ and “when Moses saw all things finished, he blessed them.” In the time of our Lord, the high priest was not allowed to have the triple crown, since Pompey, when he restored Hyrcanus to the high priesthood, refused to allow him to wear this diadem.

We will now briefly consider what were the chief duties of the high priest. He was the “Keeper of the House of God” and of all its many priceless treasures. He was expected to maintain the ritual according to the Mosaic prescriptions, to see that all the services were carried out with due decorum, and that the Temple and the sacred enclosures were never profaned. Naturally, he was not bound to see to all these details in person, since his “Sagan” or helper—“the second priest”—his substitute if necessary—was also charged to assist the high priest in looking after the

¹ Exod. xxxix. 8.

² *Ibid.*, 29.

³ *Ibid.*, 31.

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temporal affairs of the latter's office. As "Keeper of the House of God" the high priest had a dwelling within the Temple precincts, where he was supposed to live during the daytime, and all the week which preceded the Day of Atonement. He was expected to officiate in the Temple at the Feasts of the new moons and on certain solemn festivals; he alone (or his substitute) could officiate on the Day of Atonement, the most solemn annual fast day. He did not minister daily, although he could do so whenever he desired—but a "meat offering" was made for him each morning by a priest chosen by lot. This consisted of a cake of fine wheaten flour mixed with oil and frankincense.

We will now follow the various rites of the Day of Atonement and, as everyone was symbolical and typical, we shall thereby more vividly realise how Jesus, our Risen Saviour, is truly "A High Priest over the House of God."¹ This solemn annual fast was celebrated by the Jews on the tenth day of the seventh month—Tishri, which corresponds to our month of October. It was a preparation for the great Feast of Tabernacles, when the Jews thanked God for the fruits of the earth and offered the first-fruits of oil and wine. "Before that grand festival of harvesting and thanksgiving Israel must, as a nation, be reconciled to God, for only a people at peace with God might rejoice before Him, in the blessing with which He had crowned the year. And the import of the Day of Atonement, as preceding the Feast of Tabernacles, becomes only more striking when we remember how that feast of harvesting prefigured the final ingathering of all nations."² Also the Jubilee Year, when it came round in its cycle, was always proclaimed on the Day of Atonement.

From the earliest times, sinful man has felt the need of making some expiation to God, not only to appease His anger but also to renew the union between God and the soul, which sin destroys. "For this reason the blood—which to the ancients was the life-power or soul—formed

¹ Heb. x. 21.

² *The Temple*, Dr. Edersheim, ch. xvi. p. 304 ff.

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the essential part of the sacrificial Atonement. Thus God said to Moses : " Because the life of the flesh is in the blood, . . . I have given it to you, that you may make atonement with it upon the altar for your souls, and the blood may be for an expiation of the soul." ¹ Hence the Jews had Divine authority for their belief that the life of the victim was a typical ransom of the sinner's life by the victim's life, and that the blood sprinkled upon the altar was the means of renewing the covenant of God with man, which sin had broken. Consequently, the offering of the sacrifices on the Day of Atonement was preceded by the confession of the sins of the people. Forgiveness of sins, however, could never be obtained unless the sinner was contrite, for the exercise of the Divine attribute of mercy was conditional. It required that man, for his part, should repent and make reparation by prayer, fasting, and alms-deeds in varying forms. Hence, a sin-offering or a trespass-offering for a given individual had to be purchased at his cost. It could not be the gift of a third person.

We are now better able to understand the solemn rites of the annual Jewish fast. The high priest's proximate preparation extended over seven days, during which he had to dwell in his house in the Temple. The greatest care was taken that he should not incur legal defilement, for this would prevent his exercising his ministry on the solemn fast. In case he should have unwittingly defiled himself, he was twice sprinkled with the ashes of the red heifer during his retirement. He was also expected to study up all the details of the services of the day and to rehearse some of them. His time otherwise was spent in prayer and meditation. During these seven days of retirement the high priest had to perform the ordinary sacerdotal duties of offering the daily sacrifices morning and evening. The " Sagan " also spent this time in prayer and preparation, in case the high priest should be taken ill or die (or even at the last moment become legally unclean).

The night, which preceded the Day of Atonement, the

¹ Levit. xvii. 11.

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high priest was not allowed to sleep, but had to spend it in prayer, in hearing the Scriptures explained, or explaining them himself. Also he was only allowed a very slight collation at supper on the eve of the solemn fast, after which he did not partake of any food until after sundown on the Day of Atonement.

This day had a double character—it was alike a feast and a fast day. If on this annual solemnity Israel mourned, confessed their sins, and fasted, they also rejoiced at its close, because as a nation they were once more reconciled to God. The public transgressions of the nation had been blotted out from Jehovah's memory—carried away “without the city” into the desert by the scapegoat. The ceremonies commenced at dawn, and the worshippers were admitted to the Temple earlier than usual. The high priest began his sacred duties by bathing and then robing himself in the golden vestments. During the ceremonies of the day he had to bathe no less than five times, while ten times he was required to immerse his hands and feet. If we remember that the high priest ministered barefooted, and that he had to touch blood, the constant ablutions of hands and feet will not appear superfluous.

Five times, too, he had to change his robes, since he wore his golden vestments only for all the functions of his ministry carried out in the presence of the people, *i.e.* in the Courts of the Temple. When he entered the House of the Lord, carrying the incense and the blood of the victims into the Holy Place, the high priest was clad in his pure white linen vestments, of which a fresh set was provided each year. The priestly vestments “of byssus linen white and shining” were never washed. Those of the priests were used to make wicks for the immense oil lamps which lit up the Temple Courts by night, those of the high priest were “hid away,” according to Josephus. The golden vestments passed on to each high priest in succession.

Robed in his golden vestments, the high priest first officiated at the usual morning sacrifice. He also cleaned the seven candlesticks or lamps in the Holy Place, re-

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plenished the oil and lit them, next he performed the usual duties of the priest, who on ordinary days offered incense according as the lot fell, but on this day, although as many as five hundred priests assisted in the various ministrations, all the important functions had to be undertaken by the high priest himself, because he was the Mediator of Israel ; he alone could atone for both priests' and people's transgressions.

Immediately after the morning sacrifice had been offered, the services and rites peculiar to that great day were commenced. The high priest put off his golden vestments and bathed in a special golden bath concealed from the people by linen sheets only—for it was essential that all the rites should, as far as possible, be enacted publicly. He then put on the new linen vestments, and, standing between the Porch of the House of the Lord and the Altar of Holocausts, proceeded to offer a bullock and seven lambs—the sin-offering for his own sins and those of his house—although, as we have said, his personal offences were, by a kind of fictitious substitution, transferred to the people.

Before killing the bullock, the pontiff made aloud a general confession of sin for himself and his family. In this confession the name of Jehovah occurred three times, and whenever this most sacred Name of the Most High—Name which could only be pronounced in the Temple—was uttered, all who stood near the ministering high priest prostrated, while the multitude of worshippers exclaimed, " Blessed be the Name ; the glory of His Kingdom for ever." The high priest, following exactly the same ritual, then confessed the sins of the priesthood. The words of the formula were the same with the exception of the necessary change of pronouns. His own confession ran thus : " Ah JEHOVAH ! I have committed iniquity ; I have transgressed ; I have sinned, I and my house. Oh, then Jehovah, I entreat Thee cover over (*i.e.* atone for, let there be atonement for) the iniquities, the transgressions, and the sins which I have committed before Thee, I and my house—even as it is written in the law of Moses, Thy servant : For

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on that day will He atone (lit. cover over) for you to make you clean; from all your transgressions before Jehovah, ye shall be cleansed."

This was the first part of the solemnities peculiar to the Day of Atonement—the expiation for the sins of the high priest and his family. The next part of the ritual was the presentation of the two goats to the pontiff. Crossing the Priests' Court, he went close to the entrance to the Court of Israel, east of the Altar of Holocausts. There the goats were in readiness. The high priest stood facing the worshippers, his Sagan standing at his right hand, and the head of the ministering course of priests on his left. Two goats of similar appearance, colour, size and value were placed facing him, one on either side. The pontiff then plunged his hands into a golden urn and drew forth the two lots it contained. These two golden lots were exactly the same size, colour and value, but one was marked "for Jehovah" the other "for Azazel."¹ The lots, drawn respectively with the right and left hand, fell to the goat in the corresponding position. When the lot "for Jehovah" fell to the goat on the right hand it was deemed a favourable omen. The goat to which the lot for "Azazel" fell, was set apart by the high priest by tying a tongue of scarlet cloth to one of its horns and the goat "for Jehovah" had likewise a distinguishing mark—a piece of the same cloth tied round its neck. The scapegoat having been chosen, it was placed facing the people until it was time to drive it away into the desert.

The high priest now returned to the spot near the Porch where the bullock was still standing, and laying his hands upon it for the second time, he confessed once more his own transgressions and those of his house, adding a confession of the sins of the priests, the attendants prostrating and the

¹ As regards the meaning of the expression "for Azazel" applied to the scapegoat, commentators are not at all agreed. The root of the word, which signifies "wholly put aside," seems to point to the truth that the goat symbolically bore away the sins of Israel to "a land uninhabited," representing the absolute removal of guilt which should be effected by the Messias.

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people responding as previously. He next killed the bullock and, having caught the blood in a golden bowl, handed it to an attendant priest who, lest the blood should coagulate, stirred it continually until the high priest required it.

The next rite was the offering of incense, the first of the appointed sacrifices for the purification of the Temple from any pollution due to the transgressions of the priesthood. The high priest, taking the large golden censer, ascended the slanting platform leading up to the Altar of Holocausts, and put in the former some live coals taken from the altar fires. Holding a dish of incense in his right hand, and the censer in his left, he went up the steps leading to the House of the Lord, passed alone through the Holy Place and entered the Holy of Holies.

In the days of Solomon the Holy of Holies contained the Ark of the Covenant in which were the two stone tables, bearing the ten commandments. Upon the golden lid of the Ark stood two cherubim of beaten gold—their wings forming a canopy over the Ark. Between the Ark and the wings was the mysterious luminous cloud—the Shechinah or visible symbol of God's Presence among His people. There was no Ark of the Covenant in the second Temple. A large slab of marble, called "the Foundation Stone," took its place. As the Holy of Holies had no windows and was separated from the Hekal or Holy Place by two thick curtains, it was therefore quite dark within it. The Holy Place was lit up by means of the seven-branched "golden candlestick"—an immense stand supporting seven large lamps. These threw a dim light into the Holy of Holies.

It was a most solemn moment when the thousands of worshippers, in breathless silence, intently watched their high priest and mediator performing his sacred duties. They saw him, bearing the incense and the censer, go up the steps of the Porch, his assistants on either side, the Sagan on his right, the other priest on his left. He alone entered the House of the Lord, and on this solemn Day of Atonement the curtains of both parts of the House of the Lord were drawn

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back so that the worshippers might watch the pontiff's movements as he put the incense in the censer and stood there enveloped in the smoke of the incense, which often concealed him from their sight. The Israelites took it as a sign of God's favour when the cloud of incense wholly filled the sacred chamber. Having offered the incense, the high priest came out of the Holy of Holies—walking backwards.

As soon as he was outside the Holy of Holies, he offered a prayer for the people—intercession for them being one of his important duties. He prayed that Israel might not, during the coming year, be led away into captivity, that the people might not suffer want, but, should poverty overtake them, that it might be due to the liberality of their alms. He also prayed for "abundance of rain, of sunshine, and of dew," and that Israel might conquer all their enemies. The high priest was recommended not to prolong this prayer, lest the worshippers should be disturbed in their devotions by anxiety for his welfare, for his coming forth safely from his ministering was taken as a sign that the expiatory rites had been agreeable to Jehovah.

Having ended his prayer, the high priest prostrated and withdrew from the House of the Lord, walking backwards as far as the threshold of the Holy Place. He then took the golden bowl containing the blood of the bullock from the priest, who had been charged to stir it continually, and, entering the Holy of Holies for the second time, sprinkled the blood eight times before the Mercy Seat (or in front of the "Foundation Stone"). Having placed the golden vessel with the rest of the blood in front of the veil, he came out and killed the goat appointed by lot to be slain, then returning to the Holy of Holies, he sprinkled the blood eight times as before.

He then sprinkled the blood of the bullock once more, and likewise that of the goat a second time. These aspersions were performed in front of the veil in the Holy Place. The next rite was the mixing of what remained of the blood of the goat and of the bullock, and with this mixture the

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high priest sprinkled the Altar of Incense, and also the Altar of Holocausts, taking great care that his own vestments should not be stained with the sin-laden blood. As the bullock was offered for the priesthood, and the goat for the laity, expiation was thus made for all defilements of the Temple due to priests and laymen. If the Temple had not been thus purified, no sacrifices offered there would have been acceptable to God.

The touching expressive ceremony of sending forth the scapegoat followed. Atonement had been made for the priesthood and the Temple, that for "all the congregation of the people" followed, for the guilt of their *personal sins* needed to be removed, and this was accomplished "by a symbolical rite, at one and the same time the most mysterious and the most significant of all." Ever since the lot "for Azazel" had fallen upon one of the goats, it had been placed facing the people, still marked by the scarlet tongue. It was now the moment to charge the scapegoat with the iniquities of the people, and this rite was the complement of the slaying of the goat "for Jehovah": the former carried away the sin without the camp of Israel, the latter atoned for or "covered it," the two forming but one sacrifice.

The scapegoat was tied near the entrance to the Court of Israel, where all the worshippers could see it. The high priest then placed both his hands upon its head and thus confessed the sins of the people: "Ah, Jehovah, the house of Israel Thy people have trespassed, rebelled and sinned before Thee. I beseech Thee, O Jehovah, forgive now their trespasses, rebellions, and sins, which Thy people have committed, as it is written in the law of Moses, Thy servant, saying: 'On that day there shall be an atonement for you to cleanse you, that ye may be cleansed before Jehovah.'" When the high priest uttered the absolving words: "Ye may (or shall) be cleansed before Jehovah," he turned and faced them.

The goat, after having been goaded and struck repeatedly, was then led away from the Temple through Solomon's Porch and up to the foot of Mount Olivet, where

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a stranger "ready for it"—as the law enjoined—took charge of the scapegoat and conducted it to the entrance to the wilderness. No Israelite might *lead* the goat away, though several in turn *accompanied* the stranger to see that he did his work properly. The man, having reached a projecting cliff, tore off half the scarlet tongue and stuck it upon the cliff. Then, leading the animal backwards, he pushed it over the same rock. When this was accomplished, notice was given to those on watch on the tower of the Temple by waving a flag. The moment this sign was received in Jerusalem, a white flag was hoisted over the Temple gate, as a token that God was reconciled with His people. The Jews had a tradition that when God had deigned to accept the sacrifices of that day, even the scarlet tongue fastened to the horn of the scapegoat turned as white as snow. This tradition reminds us of the inspired words: "If your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made as white as snow; and if they be red as crimson, they shall be white as wool."¹

While waiting for this signal from the man who had led away the scapegoat, the high priest cut up the bullock and the goat previously killed, and sent the pieces to be burnt "outside the city." He then read some passages from the Pentateuch concerning the Day of Atonement, afterwards reciting the prescribed prayers which Dr. Edersheim thus resumes: "Confession of sin with prayer for forgiveness, closing with the words: 'Praise be to Thee, O Lord, who inhabitest Zion; who in Thy mercy forgivest the sins of Thy people Israel'; prayer for the preservation of the Temple, and that the Divine Majesty might shine in it, closing with: 'Praise be to Thee, O Lord, who inhabitest Zion'; prayer for the establishment and safety of Israel, and the continuance of a king among them; closing thus: 'Thanks be to Thee, O Lord, who hath chosen Israel'; prayer for the priesthood, that all their doings—but especially their sacred services—might be acceptable unto God, and He be gracious unto them, closing with: 'Thanks be

¹ Isa. i. 18.

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to Thee, O Lord, who hast sanctified the priesthood' ; and finally . . . prayers, entreaties, hymns, and petitions of the high-priest's own, closing with the words : ' Give help, O Lord, to Thy people Israel, for Thy people needeth help : thanks be unto Thee, O Lord, who hearest prayer.' " ¹ The reader will note how there is a special jubilant strain throughout these prayers. The high priest spoke as the mouthpiece of a people reconciled to their God.

Having concluded these supplications, the high priest took off his white robes, bathed, and having resumed the golden vestments, he offered the usual evening sacrifice. After this, he again bathed, put on his linen garments, and for the fourth time entered the Holy of Holies and brought out the censer and the vessel which contained the incense. Thus the rites of the day closed, and when the high priest had put on his ordinary garments, he was conducted in state to his abode in the city by the priests and the whole congregation of worshippers.

A banquet followed with great rejoicings, at which, for the first time that day, the Jews—priests and people—partook of food. It was even forbidden to drink, to wash one's self, and to put on sandals, so that not a footfall disturbed the awe-inspiring ceremonies of the great fast. Children under twelve years old—in the case of girls—under thirteen for boys, and the sick were dispensed from the fast. The Rabbis, however, recommended that the children should be prepared to stand the strain of the twenty-four hours' absolute fast, by abstaining partially from food. As regards washing the body, custom sanctioned kings and brides, within thirty days of their wedding, washing their faces.

Such were the mystic rites—ordained for the greater part by God Himself ; as may be seen from the Pentateuch—performed on the Day of Atonement. Each rite was a symbol and a type, and we can realise what a profound impression they must have produced in the souls of all devout Israelites, who looked through the rites beyond the

¹ *The Temple*, ch. xvi. p. 325.

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symbols, and to a certain degree, undoubtedly, understood their meaning, even though but dimly, some, on account of their personal holiness, penetrating into the sense of these significant rites more deeply than others. For example, if Abraham, long before the Mosaic Dispensation, "rejoiced" to see our Lord's day, if "he saw it and was glad," how much more would those saints of the Old Law—especially those who themselves were types of Christ—who lived after the Covenant had been explicitly formulated and sealed with blood—have seen in spirit, in the ages to come, those mysterious events concerning the Messiah of which they prophesied! Thus St. Paul represents Moses as "esteeming *the reproach of Christ* greater riches than all the treasures of the Egyptians,"¹ *i.e.* of the Messiah, whom in prophetic vision he saw when, addressing the Israelites, he said: "The Lord thy God will raise up to thee a Prophet of thy nation, and of thy brethren, like unto me: Him thou shalt hear."²

How reverently and with what spiritual discernment would devout Israelites, such as Holy Simeon, and Anna, "who looked for the Redemption of Israel," have assisted at the majestic rites of the Day of Atonement! They looked forward and discerned the reality represented by the type. We—reversing the process,—look back and trace in our Lord's life and deeds, the fulfilment of the types and prophecies, and this chapter on the Day of Atonement and its pregnant symbols will help the reader to realise how truly Jesus is our High Priest now in Heaven, ever offering His sacrifice to the Eternal Father and interceding for sinful men.

We will close this chapter—which is more suitable for spiritual reading than meditation—with the beautiful description of Simon the high priest, written by Jesus, the son of Sirach of Jerusalem, about two hundred years before Christ. The following chapter will enable the reader to realise how fittingly the inspired words apply to Jesus, the High Priest of the New Law:

"The praises of Simon the high priest: Simon, the

¹ Heb. xi. 26.

² Deut. xviii. 15.

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high priest, the son of Onias, who in his life propped up the house, and in his days fortified the temple. By him also the height of the temple was founded, the double building and the high walls of the temple. In his days the wells of water flowed out, and they were filled as the sea above measure. He took care of his nation, and delivered it from destruction. He prevailed to enlarge the city, and obtained glory in his conversation with the people: and enlarged the entrance of the house and the court.

“ He shone in his days as the morning star in the midst of a cloud, and as the moon at the full. And as the sun when it shineth, so did he shine in the temple of God. And as the rainbow giving light in the bright clouds, and as the flower of roses in the days of the spring, and as the lilies that are on the brink of the water, and as the sweet-smelling frankincense in the time of summer. And as a bright fire, and frankincense burning in the fire. As a massy vessel of gold, adorned with every precious stone. As an olive-tree budding forth, and a cypress-tree rearing itself on high, when he put on the robe of glory and was clothed with the perfection of power.

“ When he went up to the holy altar, he honoured the vesture of holiness. And when he took the portions out of the hands of the priests, he himself stood by the altar. And about him was the ring of his brethren: and as the cedar planted in Mount Libanus. And as branches of palm-trees, they stood round about him, and all the sons of Aaron in their glory. And the oblation of the Lord was in their hands, before all the congregation of Israel: and finishing his service, on the altar, to honour the offering of the most High King. He stretched forth his hand to make a libation, and offered of the blood of the grape. He poured out at the foot of the altar a divine odour to the most High Prince.

“ Then the sons of Aaron shouted, they sounded with beaten trumpets, and made a great noise to be heard for a remembrance before God. Then all the people together made haste, and fell down to the earth upon their faces,

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to adore the Lord their God, and to pray to the Almighty God the most High. And the singers lifted up their voices, and in the great house the sound of sweet melody was increased. And the people in prayer besought the Lord most High, until the worship of the Lord was perfected, and they had finished their office.

“ Then coming down, he lifted up his hands over all the congregation of the children of Israel, to give glory to God with his lips, and to glory in his name : And he repeated his prayer, willing to show the power of God. May he grant us joyfulness of heart, and that there be peace in our days in Israel for ever.”¹

¹ Ecclesiasticus L.

XXXI

“ A HIGH PRIEST OVER THE HOUSE OF GOD ”

HAVING briefly described the qualifications, status, and chief duties of the Jewish high priest, and especially the ministrations peculiar to the Day of Atonement, we will now pass from the shadow to the substance, from the symbol to the reality, which practically reduces itself to quoting St. Paul's words in his Epistle to the Hebrews, since the whole book brings into relief the great eternal High-priesthood of the Risen Saviour. The Apostle calls our Lord “ A High Priest over the House of God,” and “ The Apostle and High Priest of our confession.” As the Royal Psalmist looked down the vista of the ages, he saw One to whom the Lord swore : “ Thou art a priest for ever according to the order of Melchisedech.”¹

Who was Melchisedech and what do we know of this mysterious personage who, so early in the history of the human race, comes before us as the type of our Lord in His sacrificial office ? He is mentioned in connection with Abraham's victory over four kings who, having overcome the king of Sodom, had taken away captive Abraham's nephew Lot and seized his possessions. Abraham, on his return home after the victory, was unexpectedly met by “ Melchisedech, the king of Salem, bringing forth bread and wine, for he was a priest of the most high God.” This is the first time that we hear of Melchisedech. Having appeared suddenly upon the scene, this king and priest blessed Abraham, saying : “ Blessed be Abraham by the most high God, who created Heaven and earth. And blessed be the

¹ Ps. cix. 4.

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most high God by whose protection the enemies are in thy hands." Then Abraham gave him tithes of the spoils. And the king and priest of Salem accepted these tithes offered by the patriarch of the Jewish race as to his liege lord.

Commenting on this incident and upon Abraham giving tithes to this priest, who was also the king of justice and of peace, St. Paul calls attention to Melchisedech's sudden appearance and disappearance from the sacred page of history in these words: Melchisedech being "without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but likened unto the Son of God, continueth a priest for ever."¹ He then goes on to explain "how great this man is to whom also Abraham the patriarch gave tithes," the more so that the priests of Israel received tithes only from those of their nation. And since Melchisedech, whose pedigree was "not numbered" among the Jews, received tithes of Abraham and blessed him, the greatness of Melchisedech was thereby demonstrated, for "that which is less, is blessed by the better."

This royal priest was a type of our Lord, who is the *Apostle* of our confession—the *One sent* by God with Divine authority, His only begotten Son, heir of all things. Melchisedech is said to be "without father and mother," in the sense that nothing is known of his genealogy—neither of his ancestors nor of his successors, if indeed he had any. He was of royal lineage, and his titles king "of justice" and "of peace" set forth these virtues in the Son of the King of Kings. Also, Melchisedech offered a sacrifice of bread and wine, Jesus, by offering Himself in sacrifice under the appearances of bread and wine, fulfilled the type set forth by Melchisedech's unbloody sacrifice.

Melchisedech was a human being, hence he is a type of Christ, who became Incarnate, taking upon Himself our human nature. It was only thus that Jesus could represent man before God, stand as man's Surety, and enter Heaven, after His Resurrection, as the Head of the human race.

¹ Heb. vii. *passim*.

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Only thus could He sympathise with His “brethren” in all their joys and sorrows. Thus the eternal generation of the Son of God, His perfect Humanity, His kingly and priestly office were prefigured by Melchisedech the mysterious priest of Salem, who was likewise king of justice and peace—but as the substance exceeds the shadow, so the reality as seen in Jesus, our High Priest, is infinitely greater.

“The Apostle and High Priest of our confession” is perfect Man as well as God. In Him, the two natures are united, therefore His work of atonement has an infinite intrinsic excellence. He is the perfect Mediator, acceptable to God, as is proved by His Resurrection from the grave. Our High Priest is the Mediator of a better covenant than that of the old Law, which was ratified and sealed by the blood of animals. But since “every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices, . . . it is necessary that He also should have something to offer.”¹ What was His offering? Not “the blood of goats or of calves, but by His own blood,” our Lord “entered once into the Holy of Holies, having obtained eternal redemption.” The sinless Son of God alone could make atonement and put man once more in fellowship with God, “covering over” for man’s transgressions. In virtue of our Lord’s perfect Sacrifice, humanity can once more “have fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.”²

We will now briefly set before the reader how Jesus, our High Priest, fulfilled the various types and symbols proper to the Day of Atonement.

It was necessary for the Jewish high priest to make a special preparation for this solemn expiation—*remote* and *proximate*. Christ’s whole life upon earth from the moment of His Incarnation was a preparation for the great sacrifice which, as our High Priest, He was to offer for us on Calvary. For we needed a Mediator, who could have compassion upon our infirmities, and Jesus purchased this power of sympathy by His own experience, as Man, of human conditions of life. He passed through childhood, youth, and

¹ Heb. viii.

² 1 John i. 3.

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ripe manhood. He suffered in His sinless Body—hunger, thirst, weariness, acute pain. He endured contradictions—ingratitude, calumnies, persecution. He even deigned to be tempted.

St. Paul tells us that: "Every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in the things pertaining to God, that he may offer gifts and sacrifices for sins: who can have compassion on them that are ignorant and that err, because he himself also is compassed with infirmity."¹ But Jesus, our High Priest, "is holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, and made higher than the heavens." Yet He can have compassion upon us, for He was "tempted in all things as we are," although he was sinless. "In the days of His flesh" Jesus offered up prayers and supplications to Him that was able to save Him from death. "He prayed with a strong cry and with tears," and "whereas He was indeed the Son of God, He learned obedience by the things which He suffered," and was truly made like unto His brethren.

Infinitely more deeply could He sympathise with the sinner than any human high priest, since none realise the bondage and degradation of the slave so keenly as he who has been ever a free man. No converted libertine feels for the slaves of impurity so much as the virgin saint. Jesus knew the awful power and shame of sin by conquering the Tempter and bearing the unspeakable penalty and humiliation. Knowing, too, the infinite purity and majesty of Jehovah—of His Father whom, as God and as Man, He loved so ardently—none could understand so well as our merciful High Priest, so "holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners," how pitiable is the state of the sinner separated from his Creator and given over to the tyranny of Satan, the arch-fiend.

The knowledge Jesus had of His Father's perfections, like a powerful searchlight, caused human depravity to stand forth in all its hideousness. He knew so well how the Father longed to be reconciled to man, how He yearned

¹ Heb. v. 1.

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over the wandering sheep and what awaited the impenitent sinner, what “the pain of loss” would be in hell. The clear perception of all this wrung from His sacred Heart such earnest supplications as could never pass the lips of a merely human high priest—were he the greatest saint. Only Infinite Purity knows the terrible evil of impurity, only boundless love can measure and adequately pity human hatred. We can apply this consideration to all the attributes of God, considered in relation to man’s offences against these attributes.

Now, let us compare the *proximate* preparation of Jesus for His great Day of Atonement when He became “a Surety of a better testament.” Seven days before the Day of Atonement the high priest was solemnly conducted to his residence in the Temple. Jesus, our High Priest on Palm Sunday, amid the acclamations of the multitude who accompanied Him when He entered the Holy City in triumph, also went to His Father’s House. One of the high priest’s duties was to purify the Temple, and we read how He cleansed it during this week of preparation. St. Matthew relates that “Jesus went into the Temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the Temple, and overthrew the tables of money-changers and the chairs of them that sold doves, and He said to them, It is written : My House shall be called the House of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves.”¹ The whole week preceding His Crucifixion, Jesus passed most of His time in the Temple, assisting at the sacrifices, praying and instructing the people in the Courts of the Lord.

The high priest was expected to rehearse the ceremonies of the Day of Atonement, and we find Jesus prostrate in Gethsemani during the awful hours of His vigil, suffering by anticipation the tortures of Calvary, accepting then His office of sin bearer, letting the waters of iniquity flow over His pure Soul, and drinking of the Chalice of His Passion in advance.

It was also during these days of preparation that Jesus,

¹ St. Matt. xxi. 12.

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the High Priest, "after the order of Melchisedech," offered His Sacrifice of bread and wine—that sacrifice which was to perpetuate His immolation upon the Cross and also to be the life and the food of the Church for all time. Throughout these seven days Jesus was not alone: His chosen disciples were with Him and those Apostles who were to go forth in His Name. Among these, there were three more intimate than the others, just as we find the high priest always accompanied by his Sagan, his Catholicus and one other attendant. These three remained with the high priest during the seven days' preparation, and the number three reminds us of the presence in Gethsemani of Peter—"the Sagan" of our High Priest—James, and John, of those whom Jesus specially called to watch and pray with Him, during those terrible hours of desolation, when fasting, He kept His vigil in the garden. After the Last Supper on the Maundy Thursday no food passed His lips, not even a drink of water.

The high priest began his function at daybreak on the Day of Atonement and, at daybreak on Good Friday, Jesus stood before the high priests, Annas and Caiphas, in turn. This was the informal trial. At the formal trial in presence of the Sanhedrin, the Victim was *presented* to the rulers of Israel. Some months previously He had been *selected*, for His enemies had determined to rid themselves of Him. To the high priest fell the duty of selecting the victims, and they were chosen in presence of the priests by the pontiff. In like manner, Caiphas selected Jesus. St. John records that "Caiphas being the high priest that year, said to them (*i.e.* to the Sanhedrists in council, to the Pharisees and ex-high priests): You know nothing, neither do you consider that it is expedient that one man should die for the nation, and that the whole nation perish not. And this he spoke not of himself, but being the high priest of that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for the nation."¹

If we compare the vestments worn by the high priest

¹ St. John ix. 49.

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with those of Jesus, we remark the same analogy as in the choice of the victim. Jesus wore a seamless linen coat woven by the pure hands of Mary. Herod provided the white linen robe, the Romans gave Him the scarlet mantle and a girdle of hempen rope, so He wore the sacred Temple colours. He ministered barefooted on Mount Calvary and He bedewed this altar with His Precious Blood. Jesus likewise had his “ golden vestments ” provided by the Eternal Father who, having accepted the expiation of His Son, clothed Him as Man with garments of light on that blessed Easter morning when Jesus rose from the tomb. Also four times during His Passion our Lord’s garments were changed. His enemies saw to this detail of the ritual being duly accomplished. The Roman soldiers provided our Lord with a royal covering for His head—the crown of thorns, more precious to Him than any diadem, for it symbolised the manner in which He received His Kingdom. He reigned from the tree of shame : He had His sceptre, and His title was nailed to the Cross after a herald had borne it aloft on the road to Calvary. Though the crown and sceptre were given in derision, they expressed a great truth. In the hour of apparent defeat, precisely when His eyes closed in death, did He prevail over His enemy and ours. Our High Priest had His “ breastplate of justice ” and to each of His own He can say : “ Behold, I have graven thee in My hands.”¹ *In*, not *upon*, for the ruthless nails pierced right through those blessed hands, and ever in Heaven He presents those Wounds, now glorious as the ransom of our souls.

The high priest offered incense in the Holy of Holies, using for this purpose live coals from the Altar of Holocausts ; our High Priest offered His perfect worship—of which incense is the type—and His prayer was accompanied by sacrifice—“ being in an agony, He prayed the longer.” As the white-robed pontiff ministered in the dark recess of the Holy of Holies—which symbolised Heaven—the clouds of incense rose up from the ground and concealed him from

¹ Isa. xlix. 16.

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the sight of the worshippers. Even so a cloud received our blessed Lord out of the view of His disciples when He ascended to Heaven in their presence, even while they stood worshipping Him. Standing close to the threshold of the Holy of Holies, but within the Holy Place—the symbol of earth, the high priest prayed aloud for the people. This reminds us of how Jesus, on the eve of His passage to the Father, prayed for His Apostles, mingling prayers, adoration and thanksgivings for Himself and for those that the Father had given Him and for all who through their word should believe in Him.

While the high priest was ministering in the House of the Lord, the veil which separated the Holy of Holies from the Holy Place was drawn aside. The people could at least look into it, though they might never pass its threshold. Our High Priest is ever sitting on the right hand of God, hence, since "He is always living to make intercession for us," we can go "with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace in seasonable aid,"¹ since "we have as an anchor of the soul, sure and firm, and which entereth in even within the veil, where the forerunner of Jesus is entered for us."² As St. Paul tells us: "Jesus is not entered into the Holies made with hands, the patterns of the true, but into Heaven itself, that He may appear now in the presence of God for us."³ This is what the Church chants in her glorious "Te Deum": "When Thou hadst overcome the sharpness of death, Thou didst open the Kingdom of Heaven to all believers."

Further, the high priest pronounced words of absolution: turning to the people after he had laid their iniquities upon the scapegoat, he pronounced the consoling words: "Ye shall be cleansed." In like manner Jesus, when He was about to wash His Apostles' feet, said to the Twelve: "You are clean, but not all," for the traitor was present, "therefore He said: You are not all clean."⁴

We will note one more function of the high priest and

¹ Heb. iv. 16.

³ *Ibid.*, ix. 24.

² *Ibid.*, vi. 20.

⁴ St. John xiii. 10.

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show how Jesus also exercised it, but in a manner infinitely superior. According to various passages in the Scriptures, we see that the high priest and some of the kings were accustomed to consult God and obtain answers from Him by means of “the Urim and Thummim.” Thus “David consulted the Lord, saying: Shall I go and smite these Philistines? And the Lord said to David: Go.”¹ The expression “to consult the Lord” referred to the priests’ or kings’ putting on the ephod with the breastplate when desiring to know God’s Will. We do not know how the answer was given, but from the examples given in the Old Testament, we see that God did reply to those who prayed thus. The high priest was supposed to have the power of consulting in the highest degree, especially when he stood in the Holy of Holies enveloped in the cloud of incense.

Has Jesus, our High Priest, the power of the Urim and Thummim? Turn to St. John’s Gospel: “I have called you friends, because all things whatsoever I have heard of My Father I have made known to you.” “I will ask the Father, and He shall give you another Paraclete.” “The word which you have heard is not Mine, but the Father’s who sent Me.” Thus “the Apostle of our confession,” “the High Priest over the House of God” makes known to His disciples the will of the Father concerning them. Through Him, we have access to the Father, and in all ages the Church, mindful of her Lord’s words, has prayed in His Name: all her petitions are offered in the Name of Jesus. The Spouse of Christ can make the words of Martha her own: “I know that whatsoever Thou wilt ask of God, God will give it Thee.”² And each faithful child of the Church has this firm belief and hope.

We will now consider the sacrifices offered on the Day of Atonement, and again we find the reality infinitely surpassing the shadow. As Victim, Jesus represents both the goat slain and the scapegoat driven forth, for He shed His Blood and thereby bore away our sin. As the reality prefigured by the goat that was killed and burned

¹ 1 Kings xxiii. 2.

² St. John ix. 22.

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without the camp, He was without blemish and "offered Himself unspotted unto God." His dead Body lay in the sepulchre without the city: His Blood was presented before the Mercy Seat. He passed through the Holy Place and entered the Holy of Holies bearing His own Blood, and this is more significant when we remember that to the Jews the Holy Place typified the earth, the Holy of Holies, Heaven. Moreover, He has opened the Holy of Holies to man. As St. Paul says, we, too, can now have "confidence in the entering into the Holies by the Blood of Christ: A new and living way, which He hath dedicated for us through the veil, that is to say, His flesh."¹ Yet while He sprinkles the Blood shed for sin before the Mercy Seat, His robes are immaculate. Though the Sin Bearer, He was still infinitely pure.

The scapegoat also symbolised Jesus, who hath borne our infirmities and carried our sorrows."² That He might sanctify the people with His Precious Blood, Jesus suffered "without the Gate." The rulers gave the people their choice—"Jesus or Barabbas," and they chose the former. When Pilate presented Him to the people our High Priest, like the scapegoat, stood facing them, with a scarlet mantle around His shoulders, waiting for the final public condemnation, taking upon Himself the burden of the sins of the world.

As the scapegoat was goaded, struck, and led forth from the city by one who was not an Israelite, so Jesus was goaded, insulted, and buffeted by the Roman soldiers who led Him without the city to Calvary, while the high priests followed to see that their Victim was indeed driven forth. They rejoiced in His Death, saying: "Well done, our eyes have seen it." Thus Jesus fulfilled all the types and symbols which for long ages had dimly foreshadowed His atoning Life and work, by which He became our merciful High Priest.

Only once a year, on one special day, was the high priest of Israel allowed to enter the Holy of Holies. Only for a

¹ Heb. x. 19.

² Isa. liii. 4.

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short time might the worshippers look into the sacred building. How different is our lot, since Jesus ever sitteth at the right hand of God, day and night, interceding for us. We love to think of the Jewish high priest standing enveloped in the incense cloud. How solemn was that moment! We raise our eyes to Heaven, and there we contemplate our Lord within the veil, never to leave that blessed Home until He returns to earth to take with Him those whom He has ransomed by His life-blood.

“ Jesus Christ the same, yesterday, to-day, for ever ! ” His exaltation has not changed His sentiments and disposition towards us. In the highest Heavens He is as *compassionate* as when He raised the widow’s son, wept over Lazarus, and pitied the sheep without a shepherd. He is as *patient* now as when He bore with the Jews, trained His Apostles, and endured unspeakable tortures. He is as *forgiving* as when He absolved the woman taken in adultery, Mary Magdalene and Simon Peter. He is as *faithful to His promises* as when He manifested Himself to His own, filled them with joy, and promised to abide with them for ever. He is as *loving* as when He called little children to Him that He might bless them, waited in the heat of the day at the well in Samaria, walked on the Lake to go to His distressed Apostles, and confided His Holy Mother to St. John. His *love is as personal* as it was when He was upon earth, when He had a special affection for Mary, St. John, Mary Magdalene, Martha and Lazarus. Also He is as *sensitive to our response or rejection* to His advances and invitations as when He took pleasure in the fidelity of His disciples, and of the ministering women, in the obedience of those whom He called to follow Him. The refusal to accept His invitations wounds Him now, even as it did when the rich young man went away sorrowful, when some turned back and walked no more with Him, when Jerusalem rejected Him, and Judas betrayed Him.

Our blessed Lord, in His sublime prayer of intercession, thus expressed the earnest desire of His Soul : “ Father, I will that where I am, they also whom Thou hast given to

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Me, may be with Me, that they may see My glory which Thou hast given Me.”¹ Our High Priest still desires to have the society of His disciples ; now that He has passed within the veil, He is *even more accessible* than when He trod the fields of Galilee and the Courts of the Temple. Multitudes thronged around the great Galilean Prophet. They followed Him for days, regardless of their weariness and hunger. All were free to approach Him, and the greater their need the more He, who came to call not the just but sinners to repentance, welcomed them.

St. Mark relates that, on one occasion, when Jesus was in Simon Peter’s house—where the Apostle’s mother-in-law had just been cured of a fever—“ when it was evening, after sunset, they brought to Him all that were ill and that were possessed with devils, and all the city was gathered together at the door,” and that city was densely populated in proportion to its area. How did He receive them ? He laid “ His hands on every one of them ” ; “ He cast out the spirits with His word, and all that were sick He healed,” and St. Matthew explains that by so doing Jesus, our High Priest, fulfilled the prophetic words of Isaias : “ He took our infirmities and bore our diseases.” No mere human high priest would or could have acted thus, for by so doing he might have incurred legal defilement, and in consequence be forced to refrain, for a time, from ministering before the Lord. Jesus could and did receive these stricken children of Adam, because His perfect Purity could no more be defiled by their sores and leprosy than the sun’s rays are sullied by the filth on which they fall and by so doing purify it.

Our Emmanuel is *as accessible* as ever, nay—even more so—for when He trod this earth only those, who dwelt in Palestine or who travelled there, could look upon His sacred features and hear His wondrous words. Only those who dwelt near the confines of Judea could bring their sick to His feet. Now that He is in Heaven and concealed within the Tabernacles upon our altars, all can approach and

¹ St. John xvii. 24.

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Speak with Him at will. Nor need we even enter the church to hold converse with our High Priest, for “He is not far from any one of us.” By His Omnipresence He fills immensity in which space is, as it were, but a point. In Him “we live and move and have our being.” Yet His Divine attributes need not overawe us so as to keep us from approaching Him, for still He calls to all and to each soul individually: “Come to Me, all you that labour, and are burdened, and I will refresh you.”¹

Thanks be to God, our High Priest is truly as *compassionate, patient, forgiving, faithful to His promises, loving, sensitive to our response or rejection* and even more accessible than when He ministered upon earth. All these unspeakably consoling truths flow from the grand truth that Jesus Christ is the same “yesterday, to-day, for ever.” What practical duties result for us from these considerations? St. Paul has given the answer to this question. He writes: “Do not therefore lose your confidence, which hath a great reward.”² “Now of the things which we have spoken, this is the sum.”³ “Having therefore a great high priest, that hath passed into the Heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we have not a high priest who cannot have compassion on our infirmities, but One tempted in all things, like as we are, without sin. Let us go therefore with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace in seasonable aid.”⁴

SUMMARY FOR MEDITATION

First Prelude.—Raise your thoughts to Heaven, where our High Priest sitteth at the right hand of God.

Second Prelude.—Ask for a firm confidence in His Mercy and Power.

First Point.—Christ is a priest after the order of Melchisedech, His generation is eternal. The God Man, innocent, holy,

¹ St. Matt. xi. 28.

³ *Ibid.*, viii. 1.

² Heb. x. 35.

⁴ *Ibid.*, iv. 14.

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undefiled, fulfilled all the types and symbols of the Day of Atonement. He also offered bread and wine.

Second Point.—Jesus made a remote and a proximate preparation for His Sacrifice of Atonement. He, as High Priest, wore priestly vestments, offered the incense of prayer, prayed for the people, revealed God's Will to them, entered the Holy of Holies.

Third Point.—As Victim, like the goat slain, His blood was sprinkled upon the Altar, His dead Body placed "outside the gate." As the scapegoat, He was chosen for the sacrifice by Caiphas, condemned, goaded, brutally treated, and led forth by strangers out of the city. Jesus, our High Priest, is the same "yesterday, to-day, for ever." He still loves, pities, and invites all to come to Him.

Colloquy.—Adore our High Priest upon His throne in Heaven. Thank Him for the plentiful Redemption He has offered for you. Present to Him all you love and those who need Him most. Ask Him to bless and heal them. Confess your own transgressions, and ask that you may fully profit by His Atoning Blood. Pray for firm confidence in His infinite loving-kindness. Ask Him never to let you go away from Him; pray for the grace of interior union with Him. Ask Him to reveal God's Will to you, as far as you need this knowledge for your sanctification.

XXXII

“CHRIST IS THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH”

ONE of the great reasons why Jesus ascended into Heaven after His Resurrection, was that, from His throne in glory, He might rule and guide His Church as her Divine Head. The Son of God and of Man, by His victory over sin and death, has won for Himself the high office of “Head over all the Church.”¹ This article of our Christian Faith was no new doctrine for the converted Jew. In ages long past, the inspired prophet in one of his distinctly Messianic Psalms, foresaw that the Messiah should be the corner, *i.e.* the principal stone of the spiritual Temple of God: “The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner. This is the Lord’s doing, and it is wonderful in our eyes.”² Isaias had the same prophetic vision: “Thus saith the Lord: Behold, I lay a stone in the foundations of Sion, a tried stone, a corner stone, a precious stone, founded in the foundation.”³ In the light of our Saviour’s words, we can confidently assert that “that rock was Christ,” who is All-in-all in His Church. He is the corner stone which unites the two walls and supports the roof of the spiritual edifice, as well as the foundation on which it rests.

Our Lord applied both these Messianic prophecies to Himself when, speaking to the Jews in the Temple, He explained the parable of the Wicked Husbandmen. After quoting the Psalmist’s words, Jesus added: “The kingdom of God shall be taken from you and shall be given to a nation yielding the fruits thereof. And then He went on

¹ Eph. i. 22.

² Ps. cxvii. 21.

³ Isa. xxviii. 16.

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to speak of the punishment of those who should reject Him, and in so doing, He used the two familiar metaphors of "corner stone" and "foundation stone," and warned His hearers that none could resist His authority with impunity: "Whosoever shall fall on this stone, shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it shall grind him to powder." Whence we learn that "Christ in His humiliation is the Stone against which men fall, Christ in His glory and exaltation, is the Stone that falls on them."

Those who heard the words of this Messianic Psalm quoted and interpreted by Jesus, those "chief priests and Pharisees" who, having "heard his parables, knew that He spoke of them," also heard St. Peter interpret them in the same sense shortly after the Day of Pentecost. The intrepid Apostle boldly proclaimed the truth of Christ's being the corner stone, the Head of all, declaring that the lame man, whom they had healed, owed his cure to the Name and power of Jesus of Nazareth, whom they had crucified but whom God had raised from the dead. Then the Apostle concluded his defence by exclaiming triumphantly: "Neither is there salvation in any other. For there is no other name under heaven given to men, whereby we must be saved."¹

"Christ is the Head of the Church." He taught us this great consoling truth in manifold ways. He represents Himself as the *lord* of the vineyard, as the *king* who went into a far country to receive a kingdom, as the Good Shepherd guiding His flock and providing for the needs of the sheep. He proclaimed Himself also as the source of life in the parable of the vine and as "the fountain of living waters." If the corner stone uniting the building gives the idea of unity, and the foundation stone that of origin and strength, the metaphors of the vine and fountain convey the truth that, in Christ alone, the Church finds her life.

The Apostles taught the disciples this fundamental truth. We have seen how St. Peter proclaimed it in pre-

¹ Acts iv. 12.

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sence of his judges when questioned as to the name, by which he had healed the lame man. In his first Epistle this same Apostle quotes both the prophecies given above—from the Psalms and from Isaias—and exhorts his readers to be worthy of Christ, their Divine Head. He writes: “Be you as living stones built up, a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God, by Jesus Christ.”¹

St. Paul frequently refers to Christ being the Head of the Church, now under the figure of a corner or foundation stone, now under that of the head of a human body. A few citations will suffice to prove this. “By Him we have access, both in one Spirit to the Father. Now therefore you are no more strangers and foreigners (*sc.* although of Gentile origin), but you are fellow-citizens with the saints . . . built upon the foundation of the Apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone. In whom all the building, being framed together, groweth up into an holy temple in the Lord. In whom you also are built together into a habitation of God in the Spirit.”² The Apostle of the Gentiles, however, uses the metaphor of the human body oftener than that of the stone. He speaks of our Lord as Head of the whole creation, of the human race, and of the Church. One passage in his Epistle to the Colossians gives these three aspects of our Lord’s primacy: Christ is the image of the invisible God, the first-born (*i.e.* first-begotten) of every creature, for in Him were all things created in Heaven, and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones, or dominations, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him and in Him: and He is before all, and by Him all things consist. And He is the Head of the body, of the Church, who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; that in all things He may hold the primacy.”³ Elsewhere St. Paul speaks of Jesus as “Head over all the Church,” which He “nourisheth and cherisheth,” and the Apostle explains how various gifts are bestowed upon the disciples “for the perfecting

¹ 1 Pet. ii. 5.

² Eph. ii. 18 ff.

³ Col. i. 15 ff.

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of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (*i.e.* for the building up of His Mystical Body the Church) "until we all meet into the unity of the faith" . . . and "doing the truth in charity, we may in all things grow up in Him who is the Head, even Christ." ¹

From what has been said above, it is clear that the prophets predicted that the Messiah should be the Head of the living Temple of God; that Christ asserted His supreme Headship, His absolute authority, and that the Apostles declared His primacy in unequivocal terms. But besides asserting it in so many words, Jesus made many consoling promises which assured the Church of His abiding Presence for all time, as well as throughout eternity. He told the Apostles that He would not leave them orphans, that He would be with them even to the end of the world, that wherever two or three should gather in His Name, He would be in their midst. In the parable of the labourers in the vineyard, He represents Himself as the lord of the vineyard present in it, hiring the labourers and settling their difficulties Himself. In the parable of the great supper, the king himself—our Lord—is present at the supper (which represents the Eucharistic banquet, as well as the marriage supper of the Lamb). When Jesus uttered the parable of the Good Shepherd He represented Himself as present with His flock, going before and guiding it to safe and pleasant pasturages. Under the similitude of the woman, who had lost a coin she greatly valued, our Lord portrayed Himself diligently seeking out sinners.

All these precious promises and metaphors point to *an abiding Presence of Christ* in His Church. By "Him all things consist" in the visible creation; He is present in all His works, upholding them by His power, "ever actively sustaining all creatures." In like manner He is present in His Church, as the source of light and life; living and acting in each of the faithful children of the Church. In this, the Catholic Church differs from the many sects pro-

¹ Eph. iv. 12.

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fessing the Christian Faith. They worship a Christ who is absent—afar off, One whom they will only approach when, like Bunyan's Pilgrim, they have crossed the river of death. Then only do they expect to be in the companionship of their Lord. Catholics have a more consoling and more accurate conception of the love of Christ and of His fidelity to His promises. Accepting the words of Him, who is the Truth, they believe in a Church whose Head is ever present to guide and govern her.

Christ is present in the Church in two ways, *really* and *truly* with His Sacred Humanity, and *spiritually* by His Omnipresence and Omnipotence. We will examine briefly these two manifestations of the continual presence of the Divine Companion of our exile, and the ceaseless activity of Christ more particularly as the Head of the Church militant. In the Blessed Sacrament, under the Eucharistic species in the countless tabernacles of our Catholic churches, Jesus is truly present—Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity. In His Eucharistic Life all the phases of His Life upon earth are mystically and spiritually set forth. He lives over again and simultaneously His Hidden, Suffering and Glorious Life.

The Holy Eucharist repeats *His Hidden Life*, since at each consecration He descends from Heaven to earth. On the Altar, under the species of bread and wine, He is as it were born again. He remains there in poverty and humility, in dependence upon His priests, as obedient to them as He was to His holy Mother. Under the species of bread and wine He is presented to the Eternal Father for man's ransom. Angels sing His praises and worship Him. Kings and shepherds, rich and poor, high and lowly adore Him in the Sacred Host. Often, those who will not have this Man to rule over them, drive Him and His blessed Mother into exile, even as Herod did. Churches are closed by bitter enemies of Christianity, and the Son of Man has to go forth from His dwelling, the Tabernacle. Once more the old scene is enacted—there is no room for Him—“ the Son of Man hath not where to lay His Head.” Therefore

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in the Sacrament of the Altar, Jesus practises the virtues of His Hidden Life—humility, self-effacement, obedience and poverty.

In the Holy Eucharist we have set forth, likewise, *the Public Life* of Jesus. In His lowly dwelling He is accessible to all. Night and day He receives all who approach Him—multitudes or individuals. He again miraculously changes bread into His Body and Blood. He feeds the multitudes, heals the infirm, and draws all men to Him. As He had chosen disciples who remained always with Him, so now there are religious, whose one duty it is to keep our Eucharistic Lord company—night and day they kneel in turn before Him. He blesses all who approach Him, He calls the little children, the weary and heavily-laden to Him. He works miracles of healing, opening the eyes of the blind and the ears of the deaf. How many, now serving Him in some cloister, entered religion because they heard His sweet voice saying: “If thou wilt be perfect, follow Me,” when they knelt before the Altar or received Him in Holy Communion! He has enemies, too, who calumniate Him and misinterpret His words. Thus we see how Jesus, in the Holy Eucharist, practises the virtues of His Public Life—charity, zeal, forbearance, generosity and magnanimity.

Now, as then, He draws souls to Him in the silence of His Tabernacle; men confess that “Never did man speak like this Man.”¹ Thousands of souls have been drawn to the Church by the silent, all-powerful influence exercised by the Divine Dweller in the Tabernacle. Virtue went forth from Him to their souls and drew them to Him. It was not imagination nor heated fancy, for many thus impressed by the presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist, knew nothing of the doctrine of the Real Presence. They simply realised that some mysterious attraction was drawing them to pray in the Catholic Church; that it was good for them to be there; that they could not keep away. Having asked for and received instructions in the truths taught by the Church, “their eyes were opened.” Then

¹ St. John vii. 46.

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at length they recognised their Divine Host—“ they knew Him in the breaking of bread.”

How eloquently the Holy Eucharist sets forth *the Suffering Life of Jesus!* It is the same Priest who officiates, the same Victim that was offered upon the Cross. The Holy Mass shows forth the Lord's Death, it is the ever-present memorial of His Passion, its ever-present renewal. Impious men insult our Lord under the appearances of bread and wine, they mock at His Royalty, they treat the sacred Host with ignominy. Disciples still abandon, deny, and betray Him as of old. Also the Tabernacle well represents the Holy Sepulchre by the silence that reigns there, the reverence paid to our Lord's Body by His faithful disciples, the adoring angels and the Presence of the Divinity.

The *Glorious Life of Christ* is represented in the Holy Eucharist in that our Lord is present in His Glorified Humanity with all its attributes, and is there worshipped by the faithful with all the pomp it is in their power to procure. Incense ascends before our King on His Eucharistic throne and angels join their adoration with ours. There, too, He pleads for the children of men, there He worships the Father for and with us.

Jesus is present in His Church by the spiritual influence and activity which He exercises as her living Head. She continues the works which He did during His Public Life ; and the Church, His Bride, is never widowed. How is Christ present in the Church otherwise than in the Blessed Sacrament ? He is with her in her rulers—the Pope and bishops—in her Sacrifice and Sacraments. As her Divine Head, He is ever with His Spouse as *the source of life, truth, and authority, as the bond of union, the gage of immortality and of final victory.*

Christ is *the source of life* in the Church, and—since life spells work—of her ceaseless activity. No mere human being, however great his audacity, has ever put forth such claims as Christ to draw men's allegiance. All institutions and sects made by men are but associations, corporations, and aggregates of human beings, each of whom has his

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personal life, but having no centre and source of life as a whole. The members constitute the society, which has no life apart from them. In the Church, it is far otherwise, for she is a living organism—ever living, growing, developing until she attains to the fulness of Christ, her living Head.

Jesus frequently speaks of Himself as "the Life." He says: "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life."¹ "I am the Resurrection and the Life."² He tells us that He came to communicate that life: "I am come that they may have life."³ "To him that thirsteth, I will give of the fountain of life freely."⁴ St. John taught this truth most plainly; he says, speaking of the Word: "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men."⁵ St. Peter reproached the Jews with having killed the "Author of life"; and St. Paul tells us that our "life is hid with Christ in God," and prays that "the life of Jesus may be manifested in our bodies."⁶ Jesus has set forth the effects of the life He communicates to souls under the metaphors of the Vine, through which the sap flows into the branches, and the living water which vivifies and fertilises. How does He communicate His Divine life to the souls of men? By the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and the Sacraments of the Church. We will examine each of these briefly.

Jesus is the Vine; and we are the branches engrafted upon Him by Holy Baptism. Without His sanctifying grace we can do nothing, to be spiritually alive we must abide in Him. He communicates this life to our souls by the waters of regeneration. Baptism is the Sacrament by which we enter into communication with His Divine Life, and become members of the Church. It gives us a right to all the privileges reserved for the children of the Church, as well as a gage of eternal life, if we are faithful to that grace. Without baptism of water (or its equivalents, the baptism of blood or of desire) none can enter Heaven. Jesus tells us that, "Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter the kingdom

¹ St. John xiv. 6.

² *Ibid.*, xi. 15.

³ *Ibid.*, x. 10.

⁴ Apoc. xxi. 6.

⁵ St. John i. 4.

⁶ 2 Cor. iv. 10.

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of God.”¹ The sacred writers also taught this truth most explicitly in word, as well as practically, by fulfilling their Lord’s command to baptize all men. St. Peter writes : “ Baptism saveth you ” ; St. Paul tells us that “ we are all baptized into one body,” *i.e.* the mystical body of Christ, which is His Church. This same Apostle also lays down the responsibilities and privileges which baptism brings. Christians having been united to the Divine Head of the Church, having become living members of it by putting on Christ, must henceforth “ walk in newness of life,” as those whose “ life is hid with Christ in God.”

By the Sacraments of Penance and Extreme Unction the soul is raised again spiritually when the Divine life has been extinguished in the soul by grievous sin. The Christian, too, is strengthened in the conflict against the devil, the world and the flesh—life is given them “ more abundantly.” Confirmation enrolls men in the active militia of the Church. As in Baptism, their souls are “ sealed unto the day of redemption ” as sheep of the Fold, as Christians, so in Confirmation, they are sealed as Christian soldiers, and the gifts of the Spirit needed for the moment are bestowed, together with a title or right to all those precious gifts whenever and as the recipient may require them, even unto the end of his life.

In Holy Matrimony Christ blesses the union of man and woman, and commands conjugal fidelity. He enjoins upon fathers and mothers the sacred duties of bringing up their children to recruit the ranks of the Church. Holy Orders is the channel which continues the Priesthood of Christ in this world, and thus conveys the grace of God to souls. Christ lives and acts in and through the priest. They are the human instruments, but He is the efficacious cause of the spiritual effects of their ministry. It is Christ who, by means of the words of consecration uttered by His priests, works the miracle of transubstantiation, just as it is He who absolves when the priest pronounces the words of absolution over the penitent sinner. All exterior means

¹ St. John iii. 5.

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of grace have their efficacy "through Him, and with Him, and in Him."

If the Apostles preached Christ after the Descent of the Holy Ghost and convinced their hearers of the truth of the Gospel, it was because Christ worked with them "and increased daily together such as should be saved." It is ever thus, Paul may plant and Apollo water, yet because they are but "ministers of Him" in whom we believe as the life of the Church, "the increase" or fruit of their labours is the work of Christ alone. He and no one other has "the words of eternal life" with all their supernatural power of engendering faith in the souls of men. In the Holy Eucharist, the faithful receive Him who is "the Bread of life," of which he that eateth worthily shall live for ever. In the Blessed Sacrament, Jesus is both the life and the food of His own, and through the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, Jesus continues to offer Himself for the sins of the world. Hence the seven sacraments of the Church bring us into communication with the ever-present, living Head of His Mystical Body, of which we are the living members, if we abide in Him.

Christ is present in His Church as *the source of truth*. He who is "the Truth" has promised to be with her all her days, to give her the Holy Ghost to "guide her into all truth." Hence we are sure to walk in the paths of truth, so long as we accept with docility the infallible teaching of that Church which cannot err, of the bishops of the "church of the living God, the pillar and ground of truth." In the Name and by the authority of her Divine Head, the Church instructs the faithful, defines doctrines, and condemns heresies.

Christ is present in the Church as the *source of her authority*. In virtue of her Divine Commission, "Go ye, teach all nations," she speaks like her Founder, "as one having authority." Jesus said to His Apostles: "He that heareth you, heareth Me." "As the Father hath sent Me, so send I you." "Go ye, and teach all nations." "I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the

“ Christ is the Head of the Church ”

world.” Trusting in His Divine power and presence, these chosen witnesses “going forth preached everywhere, the Lord working withal and confirming the word with signs which followed” ;¹ thus, too, the Church has gone forth and will go forth in all ages. Never has her Head failed her, never will He fail her, ever will He be found “working withal,” and if men ask for signs confirming the word, we point to the continuous existence of the Catholic Church in all ages—to her

“ living still,
In spite of dungeon, fire, and sword.”

Jesus is likewise *the bond of union* in the Church. The faithful, in virtue of their union with their Head, are also in communion with their brethren upon earth, with the souls in purgatory and with the saints in Heaven. In the parable of the Vine, Jesus lays great stress upon the intimacy of this union. He tells us : “ Abide in Me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abide in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. . . . Without Me, you can do nothing.”² The Apostle of the Gentiles so often speaks of the union of the faithful with their Lord under the metaphor of the human body. He writes : “ We, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.”³ “ Your bodies are the members of Christ.” “ Christ nourisheth and cherisheth the Church, because we are members of His Body, of His flesh, of His bones.”

Christ is with His Church as *the gage of her immortality*, which gift is, in a very special manner, the fruit of a worthy reception of the Holy Eucharist. The sixth chapter of St. John, which contains the promise of the living Bread, abounds in references to its undying effects. Jesus has told us that : “ If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever.” “ He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood, hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last

¹ St. Mark xvi. 20.

² St. John xv. *passim*.

³ Rom. xii. 5.

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day." He could not have given this blessed promise of immortality more explicitly. He is our Divine Head and He wills that where He is for ever, there those whom the Father hath given Him may be, and that prayer of the Son will infallibly be heard since the Father heareth Him always. What a consolation for the members of His Mystical Body!

Christ, too, is *the Invincible Leader of the Church*. He assures her of the final victory, that He will give His sheep "everlasting life; they shall not perish for ever, and no man shall pluck them out of His hand." He will raise up His own with a glorious body at the last day. St. John in a vision describes the final triumph of the Church: "I, John, saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of the Heaven from God, prepared as a Bride adorned for her husband." He also heard the redeemed praising God and saying: "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to take the book, and to open the seals thereof, because Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God in Thy blood, out of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation."¹

Thanks be to God for the ever-abiding Presence of our Living Head. Even as the pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night consoled the Israelites during their journey through the desert, as the Shechinah rested over the Ark, even so we possess our Emmanuel. We can make the words of the Psalmist our own and exclaim joyfully: "Our God is our refuge and strength, a present helper in troubles. . . . The most High hath sanctified His own tabernacle. God is in the midst thereof, it shall not be moved. . . . The Lord of armies is with us, the God of Jacob is our protector."²

SUMMARY FOR MEDITATION

First Prelude.—Represent to yourself our Lord standing in the midst of His disciples and saying to them: "Lo, I am with you always, even to the consummation of the world."

Second Prelude.—Ask for the gift of a firm faith in the ever-abiding presence of Jesus in His Church.

¹ Apoc. v. 9.

² Ps. xlv. *passim*.

“ Christ is the Head of the Church ”

First Point.—“ Jesus is the Vine,” “ the fountain of living waters,” “ the Good Shepherd ” who “ goeth before ” and leads His sheep. These metaphors point to an abiding presence.

Second Point.—Jesus is really present and active in the Holy Eucharist. In it are set forth the mysteries and virtues of His three phases of life as the Son of Man—the Hidden, the Public and the Suffering Life. It also expresses certain features of His Glorious Life.

Third Point.—Jesus is ever present in His Church in virtue of His Omnipresence and Omnipotence. He is with her as (1) the source of spiritual life, (2) of truth, (3) of authority. He is to His Church and to each individual Christian the bond of union, the pledge of immortality, the gage of final victory.

Colloquy.—Thank our Lord for the blessed assurance of His continual presence in the Church. Ask that you may always be intimately united to Him, growing in grace and in knowledge of Him. Pray for the gift of a firm faith, that, both in personal trials and those which assail the Church, you may lean upon Him who abides with you and His Spouse. Thank Him for having given the blessed prerogative of infallibility to His Vicar. Ask for the grace of final perseverance. Pray for those who are in mortal sin, and for schismatics.

CHAPTER XXXIII

“HE SITTETH AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD”

THE Jews looked forward to the advent in time and upon earth of the King Messiah, who should inaugurate a glorious, temporal kingdom—of which Jerusalem was to be the seat of government ; to a king, who should be exempt from death, in virtue of His inherent immortality. Overlooking the predictions which announced the sufferings of the Just Servant of the Lord, Israel grasped eagerly at those which concerned the Messiah' glory, and these are explicit and numerous.

Isaias foresaw that a King should “reign in justice.” David places this assertion of kingship upon the lips of the Christ : “Behold, I am appointed king by Him over Sion, His holy mountain . . . preaching His commandment.”¹ The Royal Psalmist also represents the Eternal Father appointing to His Son a Kingdom : “The Lord said unto my Lord : Sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thy enemies Thy footstool. The Lord will send the sceptre of Thy power out of Sion. Rule Thou in the midst of Thy enemies.”² David also foretells the triumphant Ascension of our Lord to His Father's right hand, and records the anthems of the angelic choirs : “Lift up your gates, O ye princes, and be ye lifted up, O eternal gates, and the King of Glory shall come in. Who is this King of Glory ? The Lord who is strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle.”³

Zacharias wrote of the King Messiah, as though he himself had been an eye-witness of Christ's Triumphant

¹ Ps. ii. 6.

² *Ibid.*, cix. 1.

³ *Ibid.*, xxiii. 7.

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Entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. He exclaims: “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Sion; shout for joy, O daughter of Jerusalem: Behold Thy King will come to thee, the Just and Saviour: He is poor and riding upon an ass.” If the prophetic words spoke of the ignominies and death of the Messias—as they did most explicitly—the Jewish teachers had recourse to the theory that God would send two deliverers, one who should suffer and one destined to reign. Israel could not reconcile the idea of a suffering Messias with a glorious Messias—of the two phases being united in one person.

The Messias was *to reign*: upon this point the prophets spoke clearly. The heralds sounded forth no uncertain note touching His Royalty. Also from the moment of His Incarnation, and even during His Hidden Life, we find allusions to His kingship and prophecies concerning it. Thus Gabriel prophesied to our Lady the dignity of her Son: “He shall be great . . . the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of David His father, and He shall reign in the house of Jacob for ever, and of His kingdom there shall be no end.”¹ Choirs of angels heralded the birth of the Babe of Bethlehem; the Magi came from the East bringing symbolical gifts to the newly-born King of the Jews. Herod the Great seated upon his tottering, blood-stained throne, wielding the sceptre of iniquity, trembled when hearing of a possible rival, and, in the vain hope of killing the Divine Child, massacred the infants of Bethlehem.

Thirty years passed during which Jesus lived a hidden life of poverty and labour, years of childhood spent in exile, years of youth and riper manhood during which our King toiled *incognito*, as the Carpenter of Nazareth, realising the prophet’s words, “He is poor.” Yet all the time, He was building up His Throne. Six months before Jesus came forth from the seclusion of Nazareth, St. John the Baptist commenced his ministry. The herald bore witness to the royalty of his Master: “He that cometh from Heaven, is

¹ St. Luke i. 32.

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above all"; "The Father loveth the Son, and He hath given all things into His hand."¹

How did Jesus proclaim His Royalty? At first, we find only veiled allusions to it, but as the time of His Passion approached He spoke more clearly. A few examples will prove this statement. When explaining the parable of the wheat and the cockle, Jesus said: "The Son of man shall send *His* angels, and they shall gather out of *His Kingdom* all scandals."² He told His Apostles He would be ashamed of those who had denied Him "when He shall come in His Majesty." The parables of the king and the unmerciful servant, of the king who went into a far country to receive a kingdom, of the marriage of the king's son, and of the sheep and the goats all set forth Christ's claim to a royal throne. That the Jews understood Him is clear from their accusations against Him, in which they perverted His words: in presence of Pilate, Christ's enemies said: "We have found this man . . . forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, and saying that He is Christ the King."

When Pilate heard this, he put a question which gave our Lord the opportunity of clearly stating His Royalty. The governor said: "Art Thou the King of the Jews?" Thereupon, Jesus replied plainly in the affirmative: "My Kingdom is not of this world. . . . Pilate therefore said to Him: Art Thou a king then? Jesus answered: Thou sayest that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world."³ Most certainly, Pilate understood that Jesus laid claim to being a king, for the Gospel records that "*Pilate* wrote a title also and he put it upon the cross, and the writing was: Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews," and when the chief priests said to the Roman Governor: "Write not: The King of the Jews, but that He said: I am the King of the Jews, Pilate answered: What I have written, I have written," and that title expressed the truth, though but *partially*. The whole *truth* was set forth in our Lord's words to His Apostles before giving

¹ St. John iii. 31, 35.

² St. Matt. xiii. 41.

³ St. John xviii. *passim*.

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them their great Commission : “ *All power is given to Me in Heaven and in earth.* ” This is infinitely greater than the simple sovereignty of the Jewish nation, since it includes all Creation, all mankind and the heavenly hosts, as Christ’s chosen witnesses constantly affirmed.

Thus in the Acts of the Apostles, we find that the accusation brought against St. Paul and his companions at Thessalonica was that these men did things “ contrary to the decrees of Cæsar, saying that there is another king Jesus.”¹ To the Ephesian converts, St. Paul wrote of Christ’s royalty, telling them how God had shewn “ the might of His power which He wrought in Christ raising Him up from the dead, and setting Him on his right hand in the heavenly places. Above all principality and power and virtue and dominion . . . and hath subjected all things under His feet.”² These words prove our Lord’s Royalty as well as His Headship over the whole Church. In the Epistle to the Colossians, this Apostle speaks of Jesus’ having acquired His Kingdom by right of conquest : “ despoiling the principalities and powers ” (of the devil and his angels), “ He hath exposed them confidently in open shew,” *i.e.* He has defeated them publicly in presence of men and of angels, “ triumphing over them in Himself,”³ in that, by the Redemption, He ransomed those whom Satan and Death held captive, as St. Paul, quoting and confirming the words of the prophet Osee, sets forth, “ Death is swallowed up in victory,” through the power of our King who will raise all men from the grave.

St. Peter refers to “ the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”⁴ The beloved disciple, however, excels all the sacred writers in proclaiming the Kingship of Christ, and the Apocalypse may be called the Gospel of our Lord’s Royalty.

“ A threefold cord is not easily broken,” and we have triple witnesses to Jesus’ Kingship—that of the prophets, His own testimony, and the witness of His Apostles,

¹ Acts xvii. 7.

³ Col. ii. 15.

² Eph. i. 19.

⁴ 2 Pet. i. 11.

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Therefore the Church teaches that Christ as King "sitteth at the right hand of God in the glory of the Father"; she worships Him as "the King of Glory."

Our Emmanuel has entered His Kingdom in triumph—that Kingdom which "is not of this world." In the glorious vision granted to the beloved disciple in his old age, he saw the Son of Man in His Majesty as King and High Priest. St. John gazed upon: "One like to the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girt about the paps with a golden girdle." These words describe our Lord as King and High Priest, robed in His golden vestments and ministering—for the girdle was only worn by the priests when performing their sacred duties. A description of His Person follows, which brings to our minds the marvellous scene of the Transfiguration, though far excelling it in symbols of the Divinity: "His head and His hairs were white, as white wool, and as snow. His eyes were as a flame of fire; his feet like unto fine brass, as in a burning furnace. And His voice as the sound of many voices. And he had in His hand seven stars, and from His mouth came out a sharp two-edged sword, and His face was as the sun shineth in His power."¹

Such is the King of Glory in His sublime, supreme, eternal Kingdom. The prophetic words are accomplished: "Thou hast made Him a little less than the angels" (*i.e.* in His Humanity), then when the Redemption of man was accomplished, "Thou hast crowned Him with glory and honour, and hast set Him over all the works of Thy hands. Thou hast subjected all things under His feet."² On His throne at the right hand of God, He receives the Homage of the universal Church. In *Heaven*, eternally the redeemed sing their new canticle: "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to take the book and to open the seals thereof, because Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God in Thy blood, out of every tribe, and tongue and nation. And hast made us to our God a kingdom and priests."³ After the vision of the sealing of the tribes, St. John saw: "a great multitude

¹ Apoc. i. 13.

² Ps. viii. 6.

³ Apoc. v. 9.

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. . . of all nations, and tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne, and in sight of the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palms in their hands . . . saying: Salvation to our God, who sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb.”¹ Again when the saints glorified God for having gained the victory over the “great harlot,” the aged Seer of Patmos heard “the voice of many people in Heaven, saying: Alleluia. Salvation, and glory, and power to our God.”²

From the dim realms of *purgatory*, where the souls of the faithful are purified “as by fire,” ever rises the incense cloud of prayer and praise. This is their sole occupation as they wait patiently for the moment of their deliverance,

“Letting the fire burn out their stains,
And worshipping God’s purity.”

They have no thoughts for earth, God alone is the One to whom they aspire—and night and day, as men count time, their prayer ascends to the foot of the great white throne: “How long, O Lord, holy and true, how long?”

From the *Church militant*, from the battle-field of earth, above the din of arms, ascends the incense of adoration, praise, thanksgiving and petition. The Holy Sacrifice is offered every hour upon the thousands of altars. The Divine Office of the Church sends up its ceaseless anthems of praise and supplication and, over and above the united worship of the Spouse of Christ, rise the countless acts of adoration, the thanksgivings and the earnest cries in their hour of distress, from the faithful who are bearing the brunt of the conflict.

As in the Temple, the chants were psalmodied by two choirs, so in the Heavenly Jerusalem, saints and angels alternate their anthems of praise to our King and theirs. St. John, after recording the new canticle of the redeemed, tells us that he heard: “The voice of many angels round about the throne, and the living creatures, and the ancients . . . saying with a loud voice: The Lamb that was slain

¹ Apoc. vii. 9.

² *Ibid.*, xix. 1.

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is worthy to receive power, and divinity, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and benediction." Then follows the anthem of the heavenly choirs praising God in unison: "To Him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb, benediction and honour, and glory and power for ever and ever."¹ In like manner, after the sealing of the tribes, we find the angels, the ancients, and the four living creatures repeating the chant of the elect, saying: "Amen, benediction and glory, and wisdom and thanksgiving, honour, power, and strength to our God for ever and ever."²

The vision of Daniel is fulfilled, in which He foresaw the Ascension and enthronement of the Messias: He writes: "Lo, One like the Son of Man, came with the clouds of heaven, and He came even to the Ancient of Days, and they presented Him before Him. And He gave Him power and glory and a kingdom: and all peoples, tribes, and tongues shall serve Him: His power is an everlasting power that shall not be taken away, and His kingdom shall not be destroyed."³

Therefore, the Ancient of Days bestowed the Kingdom upon His Son as Man; and "by the right hand of God," Jesus was exalted. "The Lord said to my Lord: Sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thy enemies Thy footstool."⁴ There he must reign for ever "the Prince of the kings of the earth," "the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords," "the King of Ages." Truly, "The Father loveth the Son, and He hath given all things into His hand."⁵

In the parable of the talents, our Lord represents Himself as a certain nobleman who went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom. On his return as a king, he rewards his faithful servants saying, "Well done, good and faithful servant . . . *enter thou into the joy of thy lord*"—of that lord, now a monarch who has just entered into the possession of His kingdom. Jesus, the Son of God, became Incarnate, He descended from Heaven to earth, that "far

¹ Apoc. v. 11.

³ Dan. vii. 13.

⁴ Ps. cix. 1.

² *Ibid.*, vii. 12.

⁵ St. John iii. 35.

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country ” in which He won His sovereignty, then returning to the Father, He received His Kingdom and His joy was full. No human pen can portray, no human intelligence conceive “ the length and breadth, the height and depth ” of that joy. It is recorded that once Jesus “ rejoiced (literally “ exulted ”) in the Holy Ghost,” because God had revealed the truths concerning the kingdom of God to the “ little ones ” of His flock, then He went on to praise and extol the Father, saying: “ Yea, Father, for so it hath seemed good in Thy sight. All things are delivered to Me by the Father.”¹ He looked forward to the possession of that Kingdom with joy, and the thought helped Him to endure the cross, despising the shame.

The aspects of the joy of our Risen Saviour are manifold, for He is perfect Man, as well as God. He can rejoice in reigning by His own right, of having won His Kingdom by hard-fought battles. A kingdom won is a greater joy than a kingdom inherited or conferred. Jesus our King obtained His realms by humbling Himself, “ becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”² It was through “ the suffering of death ” that He was “ crowned with glory and honour.”³

The joy of success is proportioned to the magnitude of the undertaking, the difficulty of the task, and the sufferings endured by the conqueror. Judged from these three points of view only—for many others might be given—what must have been the joy of Jesus when it was “ full,” as ours will be some day! Our King has triumphed over all His foes. He spoiled principalities, and, like the warrior chiefs of old, He has bound His captives to his chariot wheels. “ He led captivity captive,” having overcome Satan, death and hell. He robbed death of its captives and took them to grace His beneficent triumph. By dying, He overcame death and passed from the sepulchre to His Throne, thus vindicating His honour by fulfilling all His promises and proving Himself to be indeed the long-expected Messiah.

He has the joy, too, of having overcome the enemies of

¹ St. Luke x. 21.

² Phil. ii. 8.

³ Heb. ii. 9.

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God and man—the devil and the power of sin. He rejoices now that upon earth, He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem to die for the souls of men—for in the redeemed who stand around His throne, He sees His trophies. They are there because He shed His Blood for them; they owe their Redemption to His love. No human being can rejoice over the salvation of a soul as God does, for He alone knows its pricelessness.

He has joy in the fidelity of His faithful servants upon earth. As God looked with pleasure upon Job, so the Son of God looks down from His dwelling-place upon the millions of Christians who are serving Him now in great tribulation, who are giving their lives wholly to Him, who are fighting the good combat and thus laying hold of eternal life. How He rejoices in those who are thus suffering for Him, knowing how great will be their reward!

He rejoices in their future happiness by anticipation, even as He rejoices in the present happiness of His Saints, and, above all, in the felicity of Mary, His blessed Mother. She has entered into His joy and He enters most fully into hers. When Jesus told His disciples on the eve of His Passion that He would have them closely united to Him, even as the branches are to the Vine, He added: "These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you and your joy may be full."¹ In Heaven, our joy will be indeed full as that of the saints is now. Jesus invites the souls, He has ransomed with His Blood, to *enter into* His joy, as in an ocean, for never could humanity *contain* its plenitude.

Our King has joy, too, in the companionship of His Disciples, He willed they should be *with* Him, and their presence helps to constitute His joy. Jesus, who upon earth "made that Twelve should be with Him," is glad to have their companionship for all eternity—sitting upon their thrones; glad to have made them "kings and priests unto God." He who wept when Jerusalem rejected His invitations to come unto Him, rejoices to have "thousands upon thousands" with Him, having gladly responded to His

¹ St. John xv. 11.

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advances. He delights to crown His saints when their combat is ended. He enters most fully into their joy of victory.

Our King rejoices also in the anticipation of the final triumph. We must perforce use the word “ anticipation,” because with our limitations and finite conceptions, we can but express ourselves in terms of human experience, of time and space. The psalmist exclaims, “ A thousand years in Thy sight are as yesterday, which is past, as a watch in the night.”¹ Therefore to our Emmanuel, the victory is as good as won ; He sees the enemy taking flight, and overthrown ; He rejoices in the certainty of the ultimate victory. He sees already the preparatives for “ the marriage supper ” when to the Church, His Bride : It is granted that she should clothe herself with fine linen, glittering and white, for the fine linen are the justifications of saints.”² He, to whom all things are present, even now beholds the Church, so dear to Him, “ prepared as a bride, adorned for her husband.”³

It is a joy to our King to know that He has restored to Creation its primitive order ; that once more God will be supreme in His own world, even as He was before the fall of man. The Son has given back to the Father all the glory and infinitely more, than sin had robbed Him of, by rebelling against His rights as Creator. The joy of the Son at having restored His Father’s Glory and vindicated His honour is in proportion to the infinite depths of the love of Jesus for His Father, and who can measure the depths of that abyss ? Therefore, our King has eternally the joy of His “ Consummatum est.” The work, given Him by the Father, is completed, humanity is reconciled to God, chaos has been reduced to order. Already the blessed vision of the final victory is before Him, already He hears “ the great voices in Heaven ” proclaiming to all Creation that : “ The kingdom of this world is become our Lord’s and His Christ’s, and He shall reign for ever and ever.”⁴

Another source of joy to our crowned and enthroned

¹ Ps. lxxxix. 3.

² *Ibid.*, xxi. 2.

³ Apoc. xix. 8.

⁴ *Ibid.*, xi. 15.

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King is the immutability of His Kingdom. All the prophecies, concerning the reign of the Messiah, bring into relief that its duration shall be eternal. "He shall reign for ever and ever" is the joyous anthem of saints and angels. No happiness that is unstable and ephemeral can ever be real, since the frailty of its tenure is an ever present source of anxiety. But in Heaven, the bliss of the redeemed is perfect, because it is characterized by eternal stability. Therefore to our King, who purchased His crown at the price of His Precious Blood, one of its most precious jewels must be its stability. Thanks be to God, that the Kingdom of our Lord is eternal; that all who enter the Heavenly Jerusalem and contemplate the Beatific Vision, become "pillars" in the Temple of God and "go out no more."

In Heaven, Jesus is still perfect Man, and the glorification of His human Body with Its faculties and senses—the raptures of the Beatific Vision—must be to Him as Man, a source of unspeakable felicity, even as it will be for us, though His all-perfect Body and Soul have necessarily an infinitely greater capacity for beatitude than ours. Therefore, Jesus rejoices as Man, that henceforth "there is no curse any more" of sin or its consequences; His blessed Soul no longer bears the burden of man's iniquities; His senses have each their proper objects conducing to happiness. He rejoices in all that is lovable and beautiful. The anthems of the angels and saints are agreeable to Him.

In the *Child's Book of Saints*,¹ there is a charming paragraph in one of the Gaelic legends. An abbot having enquired concerning the exquisite singing of a bird, a young monk, Diarmait, told him it was a blackbird. Thereupon, the abbot replied, addressing both the monk and his own soul: "O soul, O Diarmait, is it not wonderful that the small, senseless, creature should praise God so sweetly in the dark? . . . Gladly could I have listened to that singing even till to-morrow was a day: and, yet it was but the singing of a little earth wrapped in a handful of feathers. O soul, tell me what it must be to listen to the singing of an

¹ By W. Canton.

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Angel, a portion of Heaven wrapped in the glory of God's love ! ” What must it be to hear the singing of the nine choirs of the heavenly Hosts and the great multitude of the redeemed, whom no man can number ? Truly, Heaven is the full, perfect, pure, gratification of all man's faculties and senses, for our Emmanuel as for the elect.

“ He sitteth at the right hand of God.” In these words our imperfect human language expresses the truth that the Risen Saviour, as Man, holds the highest place in Heaven. Most theologians hold that Heaven is a place—some portion of Immensity—for a glorified Body, even that of the Son of God, is not ubiquitous, except in the Blessed Sacrament. The descriptions of the Apocalypse point necessarily to a place rather than a state. Reason tells us that there must be some marked division between the abode of the just and that of the lost. Hence the Session of our King, at the right hand of His Father, implies that He holds a dignity in the Heavenly Jerusalem, bestowed upon Him as Man—the reward of His sufferings.

He “ *sitteth*,” and this connotes rest and security. He “ rests from His labours.” He is seated, no longer foot-sore, hungry and thirsty, as when He sat by the well in Samaria waiting for a sinful woman, but, robed in vestments of Light, He has taken His place upon the throne prepared for Him from eternity. The high priest in the Temple ministered standing or prostrate ; the angel hosts fall down before our King, but in Heaven, He is represented as sitting, the attitude of one who commands. He sits patiently “ from henceforth expecting until His enemies be made His footstool.” His work upon earth, that which had to be accomplished in the days of His flesh, is completed. Henceforth He can rest in peace, security and beatitude. The fondest desire of His Soul is gratified, “ for by one oblation, He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified,” and this latter phrase in His prescience includes *all* whom the Father hath given Him—even we ourselves, unworthy though we be.

It was on the Lord's day that St. John saw the wondrous

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vision of the Son of God seated in His Majesty, and our King, Jesus Christ, rests on the seventh day—the number that expresses fulness, completion, repose, from “all His work which He hath done,” and even as God took pleasure in His Creation, so the Son of God saw His work too “was good.” His saints rest with Him: for millions, already the vision of the new heaven and the new earth is realised. “The tabernacle of God” is even now “with men,” and He dwells with them, and neither “mourning, sorrow nor death” can disturb their rest. To those, who “rest in peace,” all former things “are passed away” and time is no more. How many of our beloved dead are with Him living for evermore!

Yet though our King rests from His labours, He is ever active, for He is *the Life*, and life must ever manifest itself by activity. If the sacred Scriptures represent our King as “*sitting*” upon His throne, they also speak of Him as “*standing* upon Mount Sion,” and *walking* “in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.”¹ He takes an active part in the government of His Church upon earth, as well as in that of the Church Triumphant. The Acts of the Apostles reveal our “Lord working withal.” He overruled the lot so that it should fall upon Matthias; He blessed the ministry of His Apostles,” confirming the word with signs which followed,”² as when St. Peter cured Eneas, and St. Paul struck Elymas blind. When St. Stephen, the protomartyr, stood before his judges, our Risen Lord manifested Himself to him, and the heroic Christian martyr saw the “Son of Man, standing on the right hand of God,” waiting to receive his spirit, strengthening him for the combat. Our King also shewed Himself to Saul of Tarsus, and delivered Peter from prison, by the ministry of an angel. He is ever working in the Church as her Head, her High Priest, her crowned King.

Christ is active, likewise, in the world. *All things* are committed into His hands. He rules and guides the destinies of nations to His own designs. He holds the

¹ Apoc. ii. 1.

² St. Mark xvi. 20.

“ He Sitteth at the Right Hand ”

seals, He controls all human events, disposing them so that “ all things work together for good ” to those who love and serve Him. He governs also each human being, co-ordaining every event, every detail of each man’s life-history for the sanctification and salvation of the immortal soul. Our lot is in His hands : let us be well content to leave it there. Man cannot improve upon the government of “ the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.”

Thus our King works on until the last day, when He will come to gather to Himself all His own, and inaugurate His Glorious reign for us His members, as He inaugurated it for Himself, when He rose from the dead.

The Christian can lift up his head, for his “ redemption draweth nigh.” Life is short, even the longest, and a blessed eternity awaits us, provided we travel along “ the narrow path that leadeth to eternal life.” We have followed our King Jesus from the Sepulchre to the Throne. What a contrast—the rock tomb, the mangled inanimate Body, and the Lord of Life robed in His royal garments, seated upon His throne. Human kings pass from the throne to the sepulchre. Jesus reverses the order for Himself and for us—the disciples will follow the same path as their Master ; the royal road of the cross opens out before them. Thanks be to God, the goal is certain—sooner or later, we shall enter those gates which are never closed.

Nearly two thousand years ago our King with His vanguard took possession of the Kingdom. From that moment, the long procession of the redeemed has never ceased to march triumphantly into the Heavenly Jerusalem. Angels are ever leading countless souls from the realms of Purgatory to the foot of the great white throne ; a few privileged souls wing their flight at the hour of death, direct from earth to heaven. The majority, however, of earth’s denizens, when freed from their earthly habitation, humbly join the ranks of those bound for purgatory, there to make their last halt. All men are but units of this vast army, ever on the march, of which the vanguard is in

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Heaven, while the rear is reserved for generations as yet unborn.

At the bend of the road which men call death, those whom God called hence waved us an *au revoir*—not an *adieu*, thank God. When our turn comes, we shall do likewise. On, on, the majestic army of the Church moves—never halting. What matters it that we are often footsore, hardly-pressed, heavily laden? Our Leader “goeth before”; He has carried His Cross and the words, addressed to David, by Ethai the Gethite, a “valiant warrior,” expresses the sentiment and determination of all our Lord’s loyal subjects: “In what place soever Thou shalt be, Lord my King, either in life or in death, there will Thy servant be.”¹

Christ carried His Cross to Calvary and, having died upon it, He passed through the portals of death and the grave. Forty days after His Resurrection, He led His victorious vanguard into the Heavenly Jerusalem and took possession of His Kingdom. Sitting at the right hand of God in majesty, He awaits the home-coming of His faithful disciples, longing to receive them unto Himself, waiting for each one and welcoming them in due time—His time, not ours.

But He has other thrones—those which He occupies in the souls of the faithful in a state of grace. The kingdom of God is *within* as well as *without* us. There, Jesus wields His sceptre, but only with our full co-operation and consent. Blessed are they for whom the recording angel can write against each year as it passes into eternity: “*Anno Domini, regnante Jesu Christo,*” for only thus can we hope to pass from our sepulchre to the throne, prepared for us by our Redeemer and King.

¹ 2 Kings xv. 21.

“ He Sitteth at the Right Hand ”

SUMMARY FOR MEDITATION

First Prelude.—Contemplate our King sitting at the right hand of God, worshipped by countless angels and saints.

Second Prelude.—“ Lord, remember me, now that Thou art in Thy Kingdom.”

First Point.—Jesus' Royalty was foretold by the Prophets, set forth during His Human life, testified to by our Lord Himself, proclaimed by His witnesses.

Second Point.—Our King in Heaven is worshipped by saints and angels, honoured by the Father. He rejoices for Himself, His Father, for men. His Humanity has Its fullest happiness ; He has entered into the possession of infinite joy.

Third Point.—Our King *sits* upon His throne—the posture of peace, rest, security, and power. He is also ever active in Heaven and upon earth. He governs in the interior kingdom of Heaven in men's souls.

Colloquy.—Adore our King ; congratulate Him on His victory. Ask Him to protect and guide you along life's pilgrimage. Pray for courage to hold on, to look beyond the sepulchre to the throne. Offer yourself to be wholly His—body, soul, and mind—for time and for eternity.

“ *Laus Tibi, Christe, Tu Rex Gloria,
Eterna fac cum Sanctis Tuis, in gloria numerari.* ”

Opinions of the Press
On some Works of the Same Author

LOOKING ON JESUS, THE LAMB
OF GOD

The name of the author is sufficient guarantee for the solidity and beauty of the work. Madame Cecilia has enriched our devotional and doctrinal literature with many priceless treasures. The volume just mentioned falls in no wise short of the high standard of excellence which we have been taught to look for from the author's gifted pen. The book contains a series of meditations, intended for use during Lent, on the public life of our Lord. The various incidents and scenes of His life are individually portrayed. There is a doctrinal solidity and a practical suggestiveness in these descriptions, points that make the book one of the most useful and attractive works in its class.

“Of all the spiritual and instructive works for which we are indebted to this popular writer, perhaps none are equal to this volume, which for erudition will prove a valuable work for clergy and laity. The entire volume is, in fact, a mine of ascetic theology, and her vivid description of the various parts of Galilee, of Judea (which would seem to be derived from personal knowledge) enhance the public life of our Lord.”—*Benziger's Magazine*.

“Madame Cecilia's former works have gained for her a deservedly high place among Catholic devotional writers; they are well written and extremely solid and practical in their matter. In *Looking on Jesus, the Lamb of God*, she has presented us with a series of spiritual readings for use during the season of Lent; in order that the scope of the book may be still further extended, a summary of the contents of the chapter has been placed at the end of each section. These summaries are arranged in the form of points for meditation according to the method of St. Ignatius. Suitable colloquies and preludes are also suggested. The subject matter of

Looking on Jesus is concerned only with the public ministry of our Divine Lord as it is put before us in the Gospels at Mass during the season of Lent, but it is intended to follow up this publication with other volumes dealing with the whole cycle of the Church year.

“At the head of each chapter is given either a harmonised version of the Gospel story, or else the references to the passages in the four Evangelists, on which the chapter is based. Beginning with the Baptism of our Lord, and the Temptation, all the main events which led up to the Crucifixion, Death, and Burial of Jesus are put before us simply and clearly. There is just sufficient collateral matter introduced to render the reading easy and pleasant, without removing one’s attention from the main subject of the consideration. Madame Cecilia is to be congratulated on having produced a book which is good, practical, and instructive, and we look forward in pleasant anticipation to the publication of the remaining volumes.—*The Tablet*.”

HINTS FOR CATECHISTS ON INSTRUCTING CONVERTS

“The opening words of the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster in his preface to *Hints for Catechists* are well worth quoting. The Cardinal says: ‘There is no more consoling fact at the present day in England than the number of those in every rank of life who, without any temporal attraction, and often in actual danger of temporal loss, desire to be admitted within the one true fold of Jesus Christ.’ In order to help those who have the labour of instructing such souls, Madame Cecilia has written this volume. It is intended not alone for priests and religious, but also for such of the laity as undertake the work of catechetical instruction. Madame Cecilia writes with a knowledge and zeal born of extensive reading and wide experience in the treatment of different classes of converts. She treats of the qualifications necessary for a catechist, of the method of teaching, and gives some brief notes on certain points of Christian doctrine. Madame Cecilia has done her work well, and has given us a volume that will form a valuable addition to the books useful in the growing work of instructing non-Catholics.”—*Catholic World*.

LABOURERS IN GOD'S VINEYARD

“Madame Cecilia has laid us under still another obligation by her *Labourers in God's Vineyard*. The object of the book is to persuade women to take their proper place in the work for souls. Feminism, which, as she remarks, has been developing so rapidly during the last few years, is turned into its proper channel. Every woman of whatever station of life has some special work to do; ‘as surely as you are a disciple of Christ, so surely is your life's work mapped out.’ One of the main objects of the book is to point out the great work the Catholic Women's League is doing, and of what practical utility it is. A great portion of the book is taken up with practical methods of labouring in God's vineyard. Works for the home circle come next, and the amount that can be done in this way can only be realised by the persual of the vast number of examples given by Madame Cecilia. In the remaining chapters the natural and supernatural qualifications necessary are most vividly portrayed; while in the last we are told to remember ‘that every supernatural action shall be recompensed by an eternal reward. When the heavens and earth shall have passed away, millions of years hence, the Christian who bestowed that cup of cold water will be enjoying his reward.’ The book is written in a charming and vivid style; nearly every page furnishes some anecdote to bring home the moral still closer.”—*The Tablet*.

“Madame Cecilia writes with knowledge and experience about *Girls' Clubs and Mothers' Meetings*, and her little volume should be of great service to those engaged in promoting either of these useful works. The aims of a girls' club, how to establish it, how to work it, amusements and occupations, finances and rules, order and discipline, are each treated of in turn, and on each the author has something sensible and practical to say. We are glad to see that Madame Cecilia tells us something about the more important non-Catholic clubs, out of whose books leaves may often usefully be taken. In an appendix we have outlines of 250 plays, every one of which the author has read, with full information as to publisher, &c.; this should be extremely useful, for acting is always a popular and is in many ways a useful amusement, and workers, especially in the country, often find it difficult to know what plays to provide.”—*Catholic Book Notes*.

A CATHOLIC SCRIPTURE MANUAL

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

WITH INTRODUCTION AND ANNOTATIONS

“Madame Cecilia’s Scripture Manuals on the Synoptic Gospels are well known, and she has put Catholic teachers and students under another obligation by this Manual on the Acts of the Apostles. She modestly lays claim to little or no originality in her treatment of a subject which so many Saints and eminent scholars from the earliest years of Christianity have made a lifelong study. But originality of treatment is hardly what is desired in a manual of this kind, and had best be left, where it is possible, to those who have no fears of examinations. What is more to the purpose in a manual is that the best and most approved knowledge up to date should be culled from ancient and modern writers, and presented in a brief and clear form. This calls for great industry and sound judgment in selection, and ability to group efficiently. There is abundant evidence of these qualities in Madame Cecilia’s work. Her long experience in preparing pupils for examinations has taught her the value of the modern devices employed in the best modern text-books to aid the student. The Manual is divided into two books, which may be had in separate volumes, the first adapted to senior students entering for the University Local Examinations, the second supplying additional matter suited to the Higher Local Examinations. The text of the Acts has, of course, the usual divisions into chapters and verses, but special prominence is given to the main divisions of the subject matter and their subdivisions, which do not always coincide with the chapter and verse divisions. Throughout the commentary on the text, and in the introductory and supplementary notes, varying sizes of type according to the importance of the matter are used. Requisite maps with routes clearly marked are given of St. Paul’s journeys, and of the dispersions of the Jews, and amongst the notes are numerous excellent tables synopsising under brief clear headings information as to discourses, journeys, doctrine, &c., which must be held in readiness for examination purposes. We would commend this manual beyond the audience which Madame Cecilia modestly proposes to address.”—*The Tablet*.







