

The Days Immediately Preceding the Ascension

Jesus communicated with the Apostles quite naturally in those last days. He ate and prayed with them, walked with them in many directions, and repeated all that He had before told them.

He appeared also to Simon of

Cyrene as he was working in a garden between Bethphage and Jerusalem. Jesus, resplendent with light, approached him as if floating in the air. Simon fell on his knees and kissed the ground at Jesus' feet, who signed to him with His hand to keep silence, and then vanished. Some others that were working nearby likewise saw Jesus, and they too fell on their knees like Simon. When Jesus was walking with the Apostles around Jerusalem, some of the Jews perceived the apparition, and were terrified. They ran to hide themselves, or to shut themselves up in their houses. Even the Apostles and disciples accompanied Him with a certain degree of timidity, for there was in Him something too spiritual for them. Jesus appeared also in other places, Bethlehem and Nazareth for instance, to those especially with whom He and His Blessed Mother had formerly had intercourse. He scattered blessings everywhere, and they that saw Him believed and joined the Apostles and disciples.

On the last day but one before the Ascension, I saw Jesus with five of the Apostles approaching Bethania from the east, whither the Blessed Virgin also, with other holy women, was coming from Jerusalem. Many of the Faithful were gathered around Lazarus'. They knew that Jesus was soon to leave them, and they wanted to see Him once more and bid Him goodbye. When Jesus had entered the house, these people were admitted into the spacious courtyard and the gates closed. Jesus took with the Apostles and disciples



some refreshments standing, and to the latter, who were weeping bitterly, He said: "Why do ye weep, dear brethren? Behold this Woman! She is not weeping!" and He pointed to His Blessed Mother, who was standing with the holy women at the entrance of the hall. A long table was set in the court for the numerous strangers. Jesus went out to them, blessed little rolls, and distributed them, after which He gave them a sign to retire. And now His Blessed Mother humbly approached, to present to Him a petition. But Jesus, checking her with a gesture of His hand, told her that He could not grant it. Mary thanked most humbly, and withdrew.

Jesus took a singularly touching leave of Lazarus. He gave him a shining morsel, blessed him, and extended to him His hand. Lazarus, who generally remained hidden in his own house, did not accompany Jesus when He left for Jerusalem with the Apostles and disciples. They took the Palm Sunday route, though with many turnings into side ways. They went in four companies, allowing considerable distance to intervene between them. The Eleven went on with Jesus; the holy women followed last. I saw Jesus shining with light, a conspicuous figure in their midst. The marks of His wounds were not always visible to me, but when I did see them, they were brilliant as the sun. All were anxious and greatly depressed. Some were in tears; others were talking to one another, saying: "He has often before vanished from us," for they did not want to think that He would really leave them. Peter and John alone appeared more calm, as if they understood the Lord better, for Jesus often spoke to them interiorly and explained to them many things. He often disappeared and then suddenly reappeared in their midst, as if desirous of preparing them for His final departure.

The way ran past charming little gardens where Jews were busy weaving and clipping the hedges, on which lovely bushes covered with flowers were growing in the form of pyramids. The laborers often covered their faces with their hands, fell to the earth, or fled among the shrubbery, I know not whether from fright and terror or

from deep emotion. I do not know whether they saw the Lord, or whether they could not see Him. Once I heard Jesus saying to the disciples: "After all these places shall have been converted to the Faith by your preaching, and after others shall have driven the Faithful away and laid all things waste—then shall come a sad time. Ye do not as yet comprehend Me, but when ye will for the last time celebrate with Me the Last Supper, then ye will understand Me better."

Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea had prepared a meal, which was served in the entrance hall of the house of the Last Supper. The hall opened on all sides, and a passage ran from the left through the courtyard, which was planted with trees, to the little house with the kitchen hearth built near the surrounding wall. The covered walks on the right were opened into the courtyard, and here were set the tables for the disciples. They consisted of long planks only. The table for Jesus and The Eleven was prepared in the entrance hall. On it stood little mugs and a large dish ornamented with delicate foliage, in which lay a fish along with some small rolls. On the disciples' table were fruits and three-cornered dishes containing honeycombs. Flat bone knives were placed around. Near every dish lay three slices of bread, for there was one dish for every three of the guests.

The sun had set and it was beginning to grow dark when Jesus drew near with the Apostles. The Blessed Virgin, Nicodemus, and Joseph of Arimathea received Him at the gate. He went with His Blessed Mother into her little abode, while the Apostles proceeded to the entrance hall. When the disciples and holy women arrived somewhat later, Jesus joined The Eleven in the hall. The table, only one long side of which they occupied, was higher than those in general use. The Apostles reclined on cross-seats, but Jesus stood. At His side reclined John, who was more cheerful than the others. He was just like a child in disposition, now quickly troubled, and again full of consolation and joy. The lamp over the table was lighted. Nicodemus and Joseph served. I saw the Blessed Virgin standing at the entrance of the Supper Room. Jesus blessed the

fish, the bread, and the herbs, and passed them around with words of earnest instruction. I saw His words like rays of light issuing from His mouth and entering that of the Apostles, into some quickly, into others slowly, according to their greater or less desire, their greater or less hunger after the teaching of Jesus. At the end of the meal, Jesus blessed the cup, drank from it, and then passed it around. This, however, was not a consecration.

The love feast over, all assembled outside the hall under the trees. Jesus addressed to them a long instruction, and ended by giving them His blessing. To His Blessed Mother, who was standing in front of the holy women, He extended His hand. All were very much affected, and I felt that Magdalen ardently longed to embrace Jesus' feet. But she restrained her desire, for His demeanor was so grave that He inspired holy fear. When He left them, they wept very much. It was not, however, an exterior weeping; it was like the weeping of the soul. I did not see the Blessed Virgin shedding tears. I never saw her actually weeping excepting when she lost Jesus, a Boy of twelve, on her return journey from the Paschal festival, and again when she stood under the cross after His death. The assembly broke up before midnight.