

John never received the Blessed Sacrament

I saw Joseph returned from Jerusalem. He had taken thither cattle for sacrifice, and had put up at the house before the Bethlehem gate. It was at this same inn that he and Mary stopped later on, before Mary's Purification. The keeper of the inn was an Essenian. Joseph went from there to Bethlehem, but did not visit his relatives. He was looking around after a place to build, also for some means of procuring lumber and tools, for in the spring after Mary's delivery, which he thought would take place in



Nazareth, he intended to remove with her to Bethlehem, as he did not care for Nazareth. He wanted to get a place near the inn of the Essenian. From

Bethlehem he went again to Jerusalem, to offer sacrifice. When he was returning from this journey to Jerusalem, and about midnight was crossing the field of Chimki, six hours from Nazareth, an angel appeared to him and said that he should set out at once with Mary for Bethlehem, as it was there that her Child was to be born. The angel told him, moreover, that he should provide himself with a few necessaries, but no laces nor embroidered covers, and he mentioned all the other things he was to take. Joseph was very much surprised. He was told also that, besides the ass upon which Mary was to ride, he was to take with him a little she-ass of one year which had not yet foaled. This little animal they were to let run at large, and then follow the road it would take.

I saw Joseph and Mary in their house at Nazareth; Anne too was present. Joseph informed them of the commands he had received, and they began to prepare for the journey. Anne was very much troubled about it. The Blessed Virgin had had all along an interior admonition that she should bring forth her child in Bethlehem; but in her humility she had kept silence. She knew it, also, from the Prophecies. She had all the Prophecies referring to the birth of the Messiah in her little closet at Nazareth; she read them very often and prayed for their fulfillment. She had received them from her teachers at the Temple, and by the same holy women had been instructed upon them. Her prayer was always for the coming of the Messiah. She esteemed her happy of whom the Child should be born, and she desired to serve her as her lowest handmaid. In her humility, she had never conceived the thought that she

herself was to be the one. From those Prophecies she knew that the Saviour would be born in Bethlehem, therefore she lovingly submitted to the Divine Will and began her journey. It was a very painful one for her, since at that season it was cold among the mountains. Mary had an inexpressible feeling that henceforth she must and could be only poor. She could possess no exterior goods, for she had all in herself. She knew that she was to be the Mother of the Son of God. She knew and she felt that, as by a woman sin had entered into the world, so now by a woman the Expiation was to be born. It was under the influence of this feeling that she had exclaimed: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord!" I understood, likewise, that Jesus was conceived of the Holy Ghost about the hour of midnight, and about midnight should be born.

I saw Joseph and Mary with Anne, Mary Cleophas, and some servants silently setting out upon their journey. They started from Anne's. An ass bore a comfortable cross-seat for Mary and her baggage. On the field of Chimki, where the angel had appeared to Joseph, Anne had a pasture ground; and here the servants went to get the little she-ass of one year which Joseph had to take with him. She ran after the Holy Family. Anne, Mary Cleophas, and the servants now parted from Joseph and Mary after a touching leave-taking. I saw the two travelers going some distance further and putting up at a house that lay on very high ground. They were well received. I think the proprietor was the lease holder of a farm called the House of Chimki and to which the field belonged. From it one could see far into the distance, yes, even to the mountains near Jerusalem.

I again saw the Holy Family in a very cold valley, through which they were making their way toward a mountain. The ground was covered with frost and snow. It was about four hours from the House of Chimki. Mary was suffering exceedingly from the cold. She halted near a pine tree, and exclaimed: "We must rest. I can go no farther." Joseph arranged a seat for her under the tree, in which he placed a light. I often saw that done at night by travelers in those parts. The Blessed Virgin prayed fervently, imploring God not to allow them to freeze; and at once so great a warmth passed into her that she stretched out her hands to St. Joseph that he might warm himself by them. She took some food to renew her strength. The little ass, their guide, came up with them here and stood still. The actions of the little animal were truly astonishing. On straight roads, between mountains, for instance, where they could not go astray, she was sometimes behind, sometimes far ahead of them; but where the road branched, she was sure to make her appearance and run on the right way. Whenever they reached a spot at which they should halt, the little creature stood still. Joseph here spoke to Mary of the

good lodgings that he expected to find in Bethlehem. He told her that he knew the good people of an inn at which, for a moderate sum, they could get a comfortable room. It was better, he said, to pay a little than to depend upon free quarters. He praised Bethlehem in order to console and encourage her.

After that, I saw the Holy Family arrive at a large farmhouse, about two hours' distance from the pine tree. The woman was not at home, and the man refused St. Joseph admittance, telling him that he might go on further. On they went until they came to a shepherd's shed where they found the little ass, and where they too halted. There were some shepherds in it; but they soon vacated after showing themselves most friendly and supplying straw and faggots, or bundles of reeds for a fire. The shepherds then went to the house from which Mary and Joseph had been sent away. They mentioned having met them, and said: "What a beautiful, what an extraordinary woman! What an amiable, pious, benevolent man! What wonderful people those travelers are!" The man's wife had now returned home, and she scolded at their having been sent away. I saw her going to the shepherd's hut at which they had put up, but she was timid and dared not enter. This hut was on the north side of that mountain on whose southern declivity lay Samaria and Thebez. Toward the east of this region and on this side of the Jordan, Salem and Aion are situated, and on the oppo-site side, Socoth. It was about twelve hours from Nazareth. The woman came again with her two children. She was quite friendly, and seemed to be very much touched by what she saw. The husband also came and begged pardon. After Mary and Joseph had refreshed themselves a little, he showed them to an inn about an hour further up the mountain.

The host, however, excused himself to Joseph, pleading the numbers already there. But when the Blessed Virgin entered and begged for shelter, the wife of the innkeeper, as also the innkeeper himself, changed their bearing toward them. The man at once arranged a shelter for them under a neighboring shed, and took charge of the ass. The little she-ass was not with them. She was running around the fields; for when not needed, she did not make her appearance. This inn was a tolerably fine one, and consisted of several houses. Although situated on the north side of the mountain, it was surrounded by orchards, pleasure gardens, and balsam trees. Mary and Joseph remained overnight and the whole of the next day, for it was the Sabbath.

On the Sabbath the hostess with her three children visited Mary, also the woman of that other house with her two children. Mary talked to the little ones and instructed them. They had little rolls of parchment from which they

read. I, too, made bold to speak confidently to Mary. She told me how extremely well it was with her in her present condition. She felt no weight. But sometimes, she experienced a sensation of being so immensely large internally and as if she were hovering in her own person. She felt that she encompassed God and man, and that He whom she encompassed carried her.

Joseph went out with the host to his fields. Both host and hostess had conceived great love for Mary; they sympathized with her condition. They pressed her to remain, and showed her a room which they would give her. But very early the next morning she started with Joseph on their journey. They went forward, a little more to the east, along the mountain and into a valley, increasing the distance between them and Samaria to which they seemed at first to be going. The temple upon Garizim was in sight. On the roof were numerous figures like lions or other animals, which shone with a white light in the sun.

The road led down into a plain, or the field of Sichem. After a journey of about six leagues, they came to a solitary farmhouse where they were made welcome. The man was an overseer of fields and orchards belonging to a neighboring city. It was warmer here and vegetation more luxuriant than at any place they had been, for it was the sunny side of the mountain, and that makes a great difference in Palestine at this season. The house was not exactly in the valley, but on the southern declivity of the mountain which stretches from Samaria to the east. The occupants belonged to those shepherds with whose daughters later on, the servants remaining behind from the caravan of the Three Kings had married. In after years also Jesus often tarried here and taught. Before departing, Joseph blessed the children of the family.

I saw him and Mary journeying over the plain beyond Sichem. The Blessed Virgin sometimes went on foot. They rested occasionally and refreshed themselves. They had with them little rolls and a cool, strengthening drink in nice little jugs, brown and shining like metal. The seat that Mary used on the ass was furnished with a pad on either side as a support for the limbs, which were thereby brought more into a sitting posture. The support was over the neck of the ass, and Mary sat sometimes to the right, sometimes to the left. Berries and other fruits were still hanging on the bushes and trees that were exposed to the sun, and these they gathered on the way. The first thing that Joseph always did on arriving at an inn, was to prepare a comfortable seat or couch for Mary; then he washed his feet, as did Mary also. Their ablutions were frequent.

It was quite dark one evening when they reached a lonely inn. Joseph

knocked and begged for shelter, but the owner would not open the door.

Joseph explained to him his position, telling him that his wife could go no farther. But the man was inflexible; he would not interrupt his own rest. And when Joseph told him that he would pay him, he received for answer: "This is not an inn, I will not have that knocking." The door remained closed. Mary and Joseph went on for a short distance and found a shed. He struck a light, and prepared a couch for Mary, she herself assisting him. He brought the ass in, and found some straw and fodder for it. Here they rested a few hours. I saw them departing early the next morning while it was still dark. They may now have been distant from their last halting place about six hours, about six and twenty from Nazareth, and ten from Jerusalem. The last house stood on level ground, but the road from Gabatha to Jerusalem began again to grow steep. Up to this time Mary and Joseph travelled no great highroads, though they crossed several commercial routes which ran from the Jordan to Samaria and to the roads that lead from Syria down into Egypt. So far, the roads by which they came, with the exception of that single broad one, were very narrow and ran over the mountains. One had to be very cautious in walking, but the ass could tread its way securely.

Now I saw the travelers arrive at a house whose owner was at first uncivil to Joseph. He threw the light on Mary's face, and twitted Joseph on having so young a wife. But the man's wife took them in, gave them shelter in an outhouse, and offered them some little rolls.

When they left this place, they next sought lodging in a large farmhouse where also they were not received in a manner especially cordial. The innkeepers were young, and paid little heed to Mary and Joseph. They were not simple shepherds, but rich farmers, such as we have here, mixed up with the world, with trade, etc. I saw one old man going about the house with a walking stick. From here they had still seven hours' journey to Bethlehem, but they did not take the direct route thither, because it was mountainous and at this season too difficult. They followed the little she-ass across the country between Jerusalem and the Jordan. I saw them arrive about noon at a large shepherd's house, about two hours from John's place of baptism on the Jordan. Jesus once passed a night there after His baptism. Near the house was another for the farm and sheep utensils, and in the yard was a spring from which the water was conducted through pipes to the bathtubs. There was a large public house here; and numbers of servants who took their meals at it were going and coming. The host received the travelers very kindly and he was very obliging. He insisted upon one of the servant's washing Joseph's feet at the spring. He also supplied him with fresh garments while he aired and brushed those he took off. A maidservant rendered the same services to

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Mary, for the mistress of the house was backward in making her appearance; she lived retired. She is the same that Jesus afterward healed of a thirty years' sickness. He told her that her malady had come upon her as a punishment for her want of hospitality toward His relatives. But I know the reason of her nonappearance to Mary and Joseph. She was young and rather frivolous. She had caught a glance of the Blessed Virgin, had spoken a word to her, perhaps, (I do not now recall all the circumstances) and had conceived a feeling of jealousy on account of her beauty. It was for that reason that she kept herself secluded on this occasion. There were some children in the house.

At their departure about noon, Mary and Joseph were accompanied part of the way by some of the people belonging to the inn. They proceeded westward toward Bethlehem, and arrived after a journey of about two hours at a little village consisting of a long row of houses with gardens and courts lying on both sides of a broad highroad. Joseph had connections here such as spring from the second marriage of a stepfather or stepmother. Their house was finely situated and very handsome. But Mary and Joseph did not enter. They passed through the place and went straight on toward Jerusalem for half an hour, when they came to a public house in which a crowd was gathered for a funeral. The frame partitions in the house had been removed from before the chimney and hearth. The fireplace was draped with black, and before it rested a coffin enveloped in the same somber hue. The male mourners wore long black robes with short, white ones over them and some had rough, black maniples on their arms. All were praying. In another apartment sat the women entirely enveloped in their large veils. There was in the yard a large fountain with several faucets. The proprietors of the house, who were taken up with the charge of the obsequies, left to the servants the duty of receiving Mary and Joseph. This was done, accordingly, and the customary services rendered the holy travelers. Tapestry, or mats, were let down from their rollers near the ceiling, and a curtained space arranged for them. After some time, I saw the people of the house in conversation with them. The white garments had been laid aside. I saw a great many beds rolled up against the walls. They could be entirely separated from one another by means of the mats let down from the ceilings. Early the following morning, Mary and Joseph again started off. The good wife of the house told them they might stay, because Mary appeared in hourly expectation of her delivery. But Mary said with lowered veil that she had yet six or eight and thirty hours. The woman was anxious to keep them, though not in her own house. I saw the husband, as Joseph and Mary were departing, talking to the former about his beasts. Joseph praised the ass very

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much, and told him that he had brought the other with him in case of necessity. When the people spoke of the difficulty of getting lodgings in Bethlehem, Joseph replied that he had friends there and that Mary and he would certainly be well received. This made me feel so sorry. Joseph always spoke of this with so much confidence. I heard him again making the same remark to Mary on their way.

It so happened on the last days of the journey, when they were nearing Bethlehem, that Mary sighed longingly for rest and refreshment. Joseph turned aside from the road for half an hour to a place where, upon a former occasion, he had discovered a beautiful fig tree laden with fruit. It had seats around it for weary wayfarers to rest upon. But when they reached it they found, to their great disappointment, that it was at that time quite destitute of fruit. In after years something connected with Jesus happened near that tree. It nevermore had fruit, though it continued green. Jesus cursed it, and it withered.