

The Return of the Holy Family from Egypt

I saw the Holy Family's departure from Egypt. Herod was long since dead, but danger still threatened and they could not return. I saw St. Joseph, who was always busy at his trade, very much troubled one evening. The people for whom he had been working had given him nothing; consequently, he had nothing to take home where there was so much need. He knelt down in the open air and prayed. He was greatly afflicted; his sojourn among these people was becoming intolerable. They practiced infamous idolatry, even sacrificing deformed children. The parent that sacrificed a healthy, well-formed child, was thought to be very pious. They had, besides, still more shameful rites that they carried on in secret. Even the Jews in the Jewish towns were to Joseph objects of horror.

While in his trouble he prayed to God for help, I saw an angel appear to him. He bade him arise, and on the following morning depart from Egypt by the public high road. He told him also not to fear, for that he would accompany him. I saw Joseph hastening with the news to the Blessed Virgin and Jesus, and all setting to work to get their few movables packed together on the ass.

Next morning their intention to depart having become known, crowds of sorrowing neighbors came to them, bringing with them all kinds of gifts in little vessels of bark. Several mothers brought their children. There was among them a noble lady with a little boy of several years. She called him Mary's son, because having long abandoned the hope of having a boy, this child had been vouchsafed to her at Mary's prayer. She gave to the Boy Jesus triangular coins, yellow, white, and brown. Jesus first looked at them and then at His Mother. This lady's little son was later on admitted by Jesus into the number of His disciples, and was named Deodatus. The mother's name was Mira.

The people of the place, of whom there were more pagans than Jews, were sincerely grieved at the Holy Family's departure, though a few were glad.

These last looked upon them as sorcerers who obtained all they desired through the help of Lucifer, the prince of devils. The Jews could no longer be recognized as Jews, so deeply were they sunk in idolatry.



The Holy Family started, accompanied by all their friends. They took the direction between On and the Jewish town, turning away from On a little to the south, in order to reach the balsam garden. They wanted to rest there awhile and replenish their water supply. The garden was already flourishing.

The balsam trees were as tall as moderately large grapevines and in four rows surrounded the garden, which had an entrance. There were sycamores and all kinds of fruit trees, some like dates. The spring sent a stream around the whole garden. The friends that had accompanied them here took leave, but the Holy Family remained for some hours. Joseph had made some little vessels out of bark; they were covered with pitch, very smooth and nice. He snapped from the reddish balsam twigs the clover-like leaves, and hung the flasks underneath, in order to gather the balsam drops for the journey. When they stopped to rest, he often made, for their ordinary use, vessels and flasks of that kind out of bark. The Blessed Virgin washed and dried some things here. After having rested and refreshed themselves, they proceeded on their way by the common high road.

I had many visions of their journey, which was made without any special danger to them. Mary was often very much distressed, because walking through the hot sand was so painful for the Boy Jesus. Joseph had made for Him, out of bark, shoes that reached above the ankle where they were firmly fastened; still I saw the holy travelers frequently pausing while Mary shook the sand out of the Child's shoes. She herself wore only sandals. Jesus was dressed in His little brown robe, and they often had to seat Him on the ass.

For protection against the scorching rays of the sun, all three wore very broad hats made of bark and fastened under the chin with a string. I saw them passing by many cities, but I now recall only the name Ramses. At last, I saw them in Gaza, where they stopped for three months. There were many pagans in that city. Joseph did not want to return to Nazareth, but to go to Bethlehem; still he was undecided, because he heard that Archelaus was now reigning over Judea, and he, too, was very cruel. But an angel appeared and put an end to his doubts by telling him that he should return to Nazareth. Anne was still living. She and some of her relatives were the only ones that knew where the Holy Family were during all those years.

I had a glimpse of the Boy Jesus, now seven years old, as He walked between Mary and Joseph on their journey back to Judea from Egypt. I did not see the ass with them then, and they were carrying their bundles themselves. Joseph was about thirty years older than Mary. I saw them on a road in the desert, about two hours' distance from John's cave. The Boy Jesus, as He walked, gazed in that direction, and I saw that His soul was turning to John. At the same time, I saw John at prayer in his cave. An angel in the form of a boy

appeared to him, telling him that the Saviour was passing by. John ran out of the cave and, with outstretched arms, flew toward the point that his Saviour was passing. He hopped about and danced with joy. This vision was most touching. John's cave lay deeply buried in a hill. It was not much wider than his own little bed, though it extended some distance in length. The entrance was only a little opening, through which he used to swing himself out. In the top was an oblique aperture that admitted light. I saw in it a reed stand, upon which lay some honeycomb and dried locusts. The latter were yellow and speckled, as large, perhaps, as crabs. The desert in which Jesus fasted is four hours' distance from here. John was clothed in his camel's skin. The angel that appeared to him was like a boy of his own age. I saw him at different periods, small at first and then larger, just as if he were growing up with John. He was not always with him; he used to appear and disappear.