

Jesus travels over Luz and Ensembles to Visit the Two Inns at Which the Holy Family Rested on Their Journey to Bethlehem and Their Flight into Egypt

Jesus journeyed that same day with His followers the distance of a couple hours toward Jerusalem to a little, obscure place whose name sounded like Bethel. There was a kind of hospital in the place and in it many sick. Jesus entered, and with His followers partook of some food.

Several aged persons approached and saluted Him reverently as a Prophet, for they had heard from the lately baptized what John had proclaimed of Him. Accompanied by His disciples, Jesus visited the sick in their chambers consoling them and telling them that, if they would believe in Him, He would come again and cure them. But on this occasion He healed only one sick man, him of the third chamber. The poor man was greatly emaciated, his head covered with ulcers and white titer. Jesus blessed him and bade him arise. The man obeyed and fell on his knees at Jesus' feet.

Andrew and Saturnin baptized many of this place. Jesus ordered a tub of water, large enough for a child perhaps, to be set on a stool in one of the rooms. I saw Him blessing the water and sprinkling something into it with a sprig. I think it was some of the baptismal water from the leathern bottle brought hither by the disciples. They that were to be baptized bared their shoulders to the breast, and lowered their head over the tub while Saturnin baptized them. I think the words he used were dictated to him by Jesus and were different from those employed by John; but I do not remember them clearly. Jesus celebrated the Sabbath in this place, after which Andrew and Saturnin went to Galilee.

Jesus proceeded to a city named Luz and, going into the synagogue, held a long discourse during which He explained very many ancient mysterious symbols from the Scriptures. I remember that He spoke of the Children of Israel. After crossing the Red Sea, they had on account of their sins wandered so long in the desert, before being allowed to pass through the Jordan and



into the Promised Land. Now was the actual fulfillment of what was then only typical, for the baptism in the Jordan had been symbolized by the passage of the Israelites through its waters. If they now remained true and observed God's commands, they should indeed be put into possession of the Promised Land and the City of God. Jesus spoke in a spiritual sense, signifying thereby the Heavenly Jerusalem. But His hearers dreamed only of an earthly kingdom and of deliverance from the Romans. Jesus then spoke of the Ark of the Covenant and of the severity of the Old Law, for whoever approached so near the Ark as to touch it instantly fell dead; but now was the Law fulfilled and grace poured forth in the Son of Man. Now, too, was being fulfilled that of which the angel's conducting Tobias back into the Promised Land was a figure; for they who, faithful to the commands of God, had so long pined in captivity were now to be introduced into the freedom of the Law of grace. Jesus referred also to Judith, the widow, who had delivered Bethuel from oppression by cutting off the head of Holofernes, the Assyrian, as he lay sunk in the fumes of wine. Now would the Virgin, foreseen from eternity, become great and exalted, while the proud heads that had once oppressed Bethuel would fall. By this Jesus signified the Church and her triumph over the powers of the world.

Still many other similitudes of a like bearing Jesus spoke, all which had now been fulfilled. But He never once said the words: "I am He." He spoke always as of a third person. Then He referred to His followers, saying that they should abandon all things and have no immoderate care for their maintenance, for it was a far greater thing to be regenerated than to find nourishment for the body. But if they would be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, He who had regenerated them would also nourish them. They that follow Him, He said, must leave their relatives and live in continence, for it was not now the time for sowing, but for reaping. He spoke of the manna also. The people listened in astonishment and reverence, but interpreted all His teaching in an earthly and material sense.

Lazarus now departed. The other friends of Jesus had already left Him at the Jordan. The holy women, too, who had been staying with Susanna in Jerusalem, had gone away through the desert.

From Luz Jesus travelled southward with His disciples and crossed the desert. After journeying for some time, they came to a double row of date trees. As

they passed under them, the disciples expressed a doubt as to whether they might gather and eat the fruit that had fallen. Jesus told them to eat it without scruple and henceforth not to be so constrained in acting, that they should cultivate purity of soul and holiness of speech rather than make so much account of that which went into the mouth.

I saw Jesus entering some houses that stood in a row off by themselves on the road. He there visited about twelve sick persons whom He consoled and some of whom He cured. Several of these last followed Him.

Jesus next entered a little town called Ensemes, whither many had come to meet Him. They now presented themselves before Him, for it had already been announced that the new Prophet was nigh. They came with their children by the hand, saluted Him solemnly, and prostrated before Him.

Jesus told them kindly not to do that. He was conducted to their home by the most distinguished of the place. The Pharisees escorted Him thence to the synagogue, for they were well-disposed and rejoiced to have among them a Prophet. But when they learned from the disciples that Jesus was the Son of Joseph, a carpenter of Nazareth, there arose in their breast all sorts of prejudices against Him, for they had at first thought that He was another Prophet. When Jesus spoke of the baptism they, in order to ensnare Him, asked which baptism was to be preferred, His own or John's. Jesus answered by repeating what John had said of his own baptism and, also, of that of the Messiah. "But," He added, "whoever despises the baptism of the Precursor will not honor that of the Messiah." Still Jesus never said: "I am He," but always spoke of Himself in the third person, calling Himself "The Son of Man," as the Gospel records. In the house to which He had been conducted, He partook of a meal, and before retiring for rest prayed with His disciples.

From Ensemes Jesus and His followers crossed the brook Cedron into Judah. For the most part He followed the by-ways and valleys, the indirect routes by which the Blessed Virgin and Joseph had journeyed to Bethlehem, and paused at those places where they had put up. The atmosphere was foggy and the season tolerably cool, while in the deep valleys might sometimes be seen snow or frost. On the sunny side, however, all was green and lovely, fruit still hanging on the trees and bushes. The Lord and His disciples ate of it on the way. Jesus avoided the large cities, because there was already much talk everywhere of His baptism, the circumstances attending it, and the testimony of John. The same rumors created a great stir in Jerusalem. Jesus intended to make His public appearance only after His return from the desert of Galilee. He made this little journey into these parts only through affection

to certain individuals and with a view to induce them to go to the baptism. He was not always accompanied by all His disciples; sometimes only two were with Him. The others scattered among the houses of the shepherds lying off the road, and tried to rectify the notions of the occupants, for all were so partial to John that they looked upon Jesus as merely His assistant, and called Him only "The Helper." The disciples related to them the apparition of the Holy Ghost, the words heard at the baptism, and the testimony rendered by John. They explained that the latter was only the preparer of the way of the Lord, and consequently so ardent and vehement, for it was his to break the way.

As a result of the disciples' exhortations, numbers of the shepherds and weavers dwelling around in the valleys came to Jesus to pay Him homage, and to listen under the trees and sheds to His short instructions. Jesus blessed and exhorted them. Jesus explained to the disciples on the way the meaning of the words they had heard at the baptism, "This is My beloved Son." These words, said Jesus, were spoken by His Eternal Father of all who, free from sin, should receive the Baptism of the Holy Ghost.

This region was that through which Joseph and Mary had journeyed to Bethlehem. Joseph was familiar with it, for his father owned meadows in the country around. Joseph had indeed kept clear of Jerusalem by a day and a half's journey, and had shunned the other cities. As the shepherds' houses were to be met all along the road, he made only a few hours a day, for the Blessed Virgin found both sitting on the cross-saddle and continual walking very painful.

The chief places to which Jesus went were the houses of two shepherds at which during their journey His parents had asked admission. He went first to the one by whom Mary had been badly received. The master of the house was a rough, old man, and he refused hospitality to Jesus also. He looked like some of the peasants of our own day who say: "What more do I want? I pay my tithes, I go to church," and, for the rest, live as they list. And thus spoke the people of this house in Jesus' time. "What more do we want? We have our Law of Moses given to us by God Himself, and more than that we do not need." Then Jesus spoke of the mercy and hospitality exercised by all the holy Patriarchs, for where would the Blessing and the Law then be had Abraham repulsed the angels that brought the former? The Lord spoke to them a parable: "He that had refused shelter when she knocked at his door to the travel-wearied Virgin, so soon to become a Mother, and had scorned

the companion of her journey when so meekly seeking admission to the inn, had repulsed the Son also along with the salvation that He brought with Him." Jesus uttered these words so significantly that I saw them fall like a thunderbolt upon the heart of one present, for this was the house from which Mary and Joseph had been contemptuously repulsed when on their journey to Bethlehem. I recognized it at once. The most aged of the occupants became greatly distressed, for without naming Himself, Mary, or Joseph, Jesus had in this parable related what they had done.

Hereupon one of them cast himself at Jesus' feet, begging Him to tarry with them and accept refreshment, for, as he said, Jesus must surely be a Prophet, since He knew all that had happened here thirty years ago. But Jesus would accept nothing from them. He taught the shepherds who had assembled around Him, saying that one action is the type, the kernel of that which follows, that the roots of sin are destroyed by contrition and penance, and that by conversion man would be born anew in the Baptism of the Holy Ghost and bring forth fruits of eternal life.

From this place Jesus journeyed on through the valleys, teaching here and there as He went. The possessed cried after Him, but became silent upon His command.

He arrived at a second shepherd inn which stood on a hill. The Holy Family had been there also. The man of the house owned numerous herds. In rows of houses along the valleys, dwelt shepherds and tent weavers. Stretched in the open air were long strips of stuff upon which the weavers worked one to another. There were many flocks of sheep in this region, and wild animals not a few. The doves went in flocks like hens, and there was another kind of bird, large with a long tail, very numerous here. In the wilderness ran animals with little horns like deer; they were not timid, but mixed up freely with the herds. Jesus was most cordially received. The people of the house with the neighbors and children went out joyously to meet Him, and cast themselves down before Him. The Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph had been most kindly entertained at this house, which was now kept by a couple of young people, children of the old householder. The latter was still alive, a little, stooped old man who carried a small shepherd staff. Jesus accepted food here: fruits, herbs which they dipped in sauce, and small rolls baked in the ashes. The members of this family were very pious and enlightened.

They introduced Jesus into the room wherein the Blessed Virgin had passed the night, and which they had long ago changed into an oratory. It was at first merely a retired corner of the house cut off by only a partition, but later

they had so arranged it as to form a separate apartment with an entrance of its own. From a four-cornered, they had changed it into an eight-cornered room; the ceiling running up from the different corners formed a central obtuse point, from which hung a lamp. There was also in the roof an aperture that could be opened at pleasure. In front of the lamp was a narrow table, something like our Communion rail, upon which one could lean when in prayer. The room was very neat and beautiful like a chapel. The venerable old man led Jesus in and pointed out to Him the spot in which His Holy Mother had rested, also where Anne, His grandmother had slept; for she, too, had put up here on her journey to visit the Blessed Virgin in Bethlehem.

These people knew of the birth of Jesus, the adoration of the Three Kings, the prophecies of Simeon and Anna in the Temple, the flight into Egypt, and of the admirable teaching of Jesus in the Temple. Several of these days they commemorated with prayer in their little chapel, for from the very beginning this family had sincerely believed, hoped, and loved. Like the simple peasants that they were, they questioned Jesus as to how things were then in Jerusalem, for they had heard that, among the great ones there, the report was current that the new Messiah would, in quality of King of the Jews, restore to them the scepter and free them from the Roman yoke. They asked Jesus whether, indeed, things would so turn out. Jesus answered their questions by a parable. "A young prince," He said, "had been sent by the king, his father, to take possession of his throne, to restore the Sacred Mystery, and to free his people from bondage. But they to whom he was sent would not recognize him as the king's son, they persecuted and maltreated him. Nevertheless, he would after a time be exalted, he would draw to himself in the kingdom of his father all that faithfully kept his commandments."

Many accompanied Jesus into the little chapel and there listened to His teaching. He also performed some cures here. The old shepherd conducted Him to one of his neighbors who had for long years been confined to bed with the gout. Jesus took her by the hand and commanded her to arise. She obeyed instantly and, casting herself on her knees, thanked the Lord, after which she followed her Benefactor to the door. The poor woman had been as crooked and stooped as Peter's mother-in-law.

Jesus asked to be taken down into a deep valley in which were many sick. He cured several, perhaps about ten, and consoled the rest.

John was still baptizing the crowds that continued to present themselves.

The tree from Jesus' baptismal pool had been removed to the center of the large pool and had become beautifully green. This latter pool was reached by steps descending from the shore. Many tongues of land jutted out into it, and

on them the people in turn took their stand, descending on one side and ascending on the other.

When Jesus left the shepherd house, distant from Jerusalem about five hours, the people followed Him. They had associated with the shepherds who had visited Jesus in the Crib and, on that account, were so upright in intention.

The Lord and His disciples pursued their journey through byways and retired places. Here and there assembled around Him crowds of shepherds and laborers whom He instructed in similitudes borrowed from their own occupations. He exhorted them repeatedly to baptism and penance, and spoke of Redemption and the near coming of the Messiah.

I saw on Jesus' road a fertile spot on the declivity of the mountain and there, engaged in all kinds of field and vineyard labor, were many people. I saw plowing, sowing, planting going on, and heaps of corn being gathered together. It was very fruitful here although, as in other places, frost or snow covered the valleys. The corn was not put up in sheaves. The ears were cut off about one-half a foot in length and then bound together in the center, so that they piled up in heaps. They were not gathered in as had been done long before in the harvest, but were allowed to stand outdoors in heaps high and broad like hills. They were covered with straw when the rainy season came on, and the field was plowed up anew. The ears were afterward cut off with a curved knife, the straw pulled out and thrown on the heaps.

Then I saw the gathering in, the ears piled on litters and borne away by four men. The straw remained lying in rows; it was afterward rolled into bundles, I think for burning. In other places they were plowing. The plow had no wheels, but was drawn by men. The one that I saw was like a sled on three sharp heavy runners, between two of which was the place for yoking. Usually the plow was not guided from behind, but asses or men pulled it in front.

The fields were plowed both in length and breadth. The harrows used by these people were three-cornered, the broad part in front. They seemed to work quite well. Where the soil was rocky, a little earth spread over it afforded sufficient support for vegetation. The sowers carried their sack slung round the neck, the two ends hanging on their breast. The plants that I saw set out were garlic, and a certain large-leaved plant used for seasoning, I think. One species is called durra.

The disciples gathered the people together on the way, and Jesus taught them in parables of plowing, sowing, and reaping. He spoke to the disciples

of the seed they would scatter by means of Baptism. He appointed two, one of whom was Saturnin, to baptize shortly at the Jordan. He addressed them, saying: "This is the seed. And like unto the people before us, shall ye in two months begin your harvest." Then He spoke of the straw that was to be cast into the fire. While Jesus was thus teaching, a crowd of laborers from Sichar came in sight along the road, carrying spades, pickaxes, and long poles. They looked like slaves, and appeared to be returning home from work on some public building or road. They halted at some distance and listened with a timid air to the words of Jesus, not daring to approach nearer to the Jews.

But Jesus, raising His voice, bade them draw near, telling them that His Heavenly Father called all to Himself through Him; and then He spoke of the equality of all that do penance and receive Baptism. The poor creatures were so affected by Jesus' gentle words that, falling on their knees, they implored Him to come to Samaria and help them also. Jesus replied that He would indeed go to them, but not just yet, for He must now go away for awhile in order to prepare His Kingdom, of which His Father had sent Him to take possession.

And now the shepherds again conducted Jesus over all the roads and byways that His Mother had traversed. But when they found that He was better acquainted with them than even they themselves, they exclaimed in wonder: "Lord, Thou art a Prophet! Thou art a filial Son, thus to know and trace the footsteps of Thy Blessed Mother!"

After Jesus had taught and exhorted the multitude, He went to the little city of Beth-Araba. It was afternoon when He and His disciples arrived. They proceeded to an open square, and Jesus mounted the stone pulpit under the trees. A crowd gathered around Him, and He taught. The people here were men of good will.