

The Apostles Arrive to Be Present at the Blessed Virgin's Death

As the Blessed Virgin felt her end approaching, in accordance with the directions of her Divine Son, she called the Apostles to her by prayer. She was now in her sixty-third year. At the time of Christ's birth she was in her fifteenth. Before His Ascension Jesus had made known to His most holy Mother what she should say at the end of her earthly career to the



Apostles and some of the disciples who should be with her. He told her also that she should bless them, and that it would conduce very much to their welfare and eternal salvation. He entrusted to her also certain spiritual labors for the general good, which being accomplished, her longing after Heaven was to be realized. Jesus had at the same time made known to Magdalen that she was to live concealed in the wilderness, and that Martha was to establish a community of women. He added that He Himself would always be with them.

At the prayer of the Blessed Virgin, the Apostles received, through angels, an admonition to repair to her at Ephesus. In the various places in which they were, they had erected little churches here and there. Many of them were constructed merely of plaited rods, or branches, covered with clay, but all were of the same form as Mary's house, that is, three-cornered in the back. They were provided with altars for the celebration of Holy Mass. The journeys of the Apostles, so distant, so exceedingly remote, were not made without divine assistance. Although they themselves were perhaps unconscious of it at the time, yet I do not doubt that they passed through many dangers in a supernatural manner. I often saw them walking unnoticed through the midst of a crowd, I have likewise seen that the miracles wrought by them among the various pagan nations were very numerous and of a different kind from those recorded of them in the Holy Scriptures. They labored everywhere according to the peculiar needs of the people. I saw that they carried about them the bones of the Prophets or those of the first Christian martyrs, which relics they placed before them in time of prayer or when offering the Holy Sacrifice.

When called to Mary, Peter was in the region of Antioch with another

Apostle. Andrew, who had shortly before been in Jerusalem, but had there been persecuted, was not far from Peter. I saw them both on their way to Ephesus at places not very distant from each other. They passed the nights in those open inns that are met along the roads in hot countries. As Peter was lying one night near a wall, a resplendent youth approached him, took him by the hand, and bade him arise and hasten to Mary. On the way, the youth said, he would meet Andrew. Peter, who had grown stiff from age and fatigue, rose to a sitting posture and, clasping his hands round his knees to support himself, listened to the angel's words. Then he stood up, put on his mantle, girded himself, took his staff, and started on his journey. He soon came up with Andrew, who had been called by the same apparition. After travelling some distance they were met by Thaddeus, who also had received a similar warning. They journeyed together to Mary, with whom they found John.

Jude Thaddeus and Simon were in Persia when they received their summons, Thomas, who was in stature thick and short and had reddish-brown or auburn hair, was of all the Apostles the farthest off. He arrived only after Mary's death. When the angel came to call him, he was praying in a hut built of reeds. With one very poor, simple servant, I saw him sailing alone in a little boat far over the waters. Then he journeyed across the country, turning aside from all the cities. A disciple now accompanied

him. Thomas was in India when he received the warning. Before receiving it he had determined to go into Tartary, and he could not bring himself to change his plans. He always wanted to do so much, therefore it was that he was often behind time. So off he started northward almost across China, where Russia now is.¹ Here he was called a second time. He obeyed the summons and hurried to Ephesus. The servant with him was a Tartar whom he had baptized. Thomas did not return to Tartary after Mary's death. He was pierced with a lance in India. I have seen that he set up a stone in this last-named country, upon which he knelt in prayer, and upon which the marks of his knees remained impressed. He told the people that when the sea would reach that stone, another would here preach Jesus Christ.

John had shortly before been in Jericho, for he often journeyed to Palestine, He usually abode in Ephesus, however, and the country around.

Bartholomew was in Asia east of the Red Sea. He was handsome and very active, his complexion fair and his forehead high. He had large eyes, black curly hair, and a short, crisp beard, black and parted on the chin. He had already converted a king and all the royal family. Paul was not summoned. Those only were called that were related or acquainted with the Holy Family. Peter, Andrew, and John were the first to reach the Blessed Virgin's house.

She was already near death. She was lying calmly on her couch in her sleeping place. I saw the maidservant looking very sorrowful in this and that corner of the house, also outdoors, where she prayed prostrate with outstretched arms. I saw also two of Mary's sisters and five disciples coming together to the house. All looked tired and exhausted. They carried staves of various kinds, each according to his rank. They wore, under their hooded mantles of white wool, long albs of the same material fastened all the way down the front with little leather straps slit in the middle over little rolls like buttons. Both mantle and alb were girded high when travelling. Some had a pouch hanging from their girdle at the side. They embraced each other tenderly when they met. Many wept from mingled feelings of joy and sorrow at meeting on such an occasion. On entering the house, they laid aside their mantles, staves, pouches, and girdles; allowed their white robes to fall in broad folds down to their feet, and each put on a wide girdle inscribed with letters, which he had brought with him. Then with deep emotion they drew near Mary's couch to salute her, though she could now say only a few words. I did not see the travelers taking anything on their arrival, excepting some kind of beverage from a little flask, with which each one came provided. They did not sleep in the house, but outside under light awnings, which were put up on posts against the walls, and which were divided off and enclosed by movable screens and wickerwork.

I saw that the first to arrive prepared in the front apartment of the house a place suitable for prayer and offering the Holy Sacrifice. There was an altar covered with a red and over that a white cloth, and on it stood a Crucifix, white like mother-of-pearl, and in shape like a Maltese cross. The cross could be opened. It contained five compartments, likewise cross-shaped. The middle one held the Most Blessed Sacrament, while the others were intended respectively for chrism, oil, cotton, and salt. It was not quite a span, or nine inches, in length. Each of the Apostles when travelling carried one like it on his breast. It was in this cross that Peter took to Mary the Holy Communion, during the reception of which the Apostles stood bowing low, ranged in two rows from the altar down to her couch. The altar, before which was a stand with rolls of Scripture hanging over it, was not in the center of the front apartment, where the fireplace stood, for that was still in use. It was placed near the wall on the right, and was put up and taken down every day.

When the Apostles went all together into Mary's little sleeping chamber in order to take leave of her, they wore their long white albs and broad mantles. The screens that separated the front from the back of the house had been removed. The disciples and holy women remained standing in the front

apartment. I saw that Mary sat upright, that the Apostles knelt in turn at the side of her couch, and that she prayed over each and blessed him with her hands laid upon him crosswise. She did the same to the disciples and to the women. One of the latter, who stood quite bent in two over Mary, received an embrace from her. When Peter stepped up to the couch, I saw that he had a roll of Scriptures in his hand. Mary then addressed them in a body, and did all that Jesus had in Bethania directed her to do, I saw also that she told John what was to be done with her remains, and that he should see that her clothes were divided between her own maidservant and a maiden of the neighborhood who came sometimes to render her service. As she spoke, she pointed to the press, or partition, and I saw the maid going to it, opening and closing it.