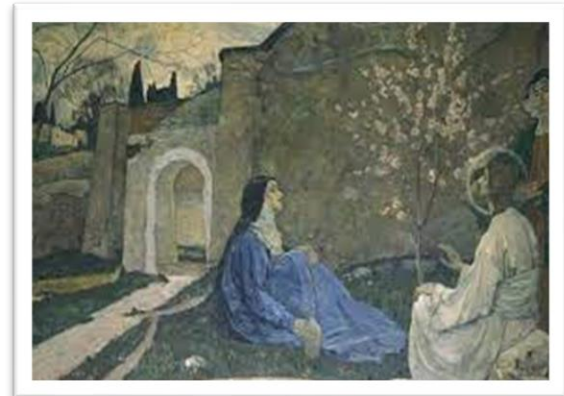


Jesus' Interview with Silent Mary. His Conversation with His Mother

Accompanied by Lazarus, Jesus went also to the abode of the women, and Martha took Him to her silent sister Mary, with whom He wished to speak. A wall separated the large courtyard from a smaller one, which latter, however, was still quite spacious. In it was an enclosed garden adjoining

Mary's dwelling. They passed through a gate, and Jesus remained in the little garden while Martha went to call her silent sister. The garden was highly ornamental. In the center stood a large date tree, and all around were aromatic herbs and shrubs. On one side was a fountain or rather a kind of tiny lake with a stone seat in the center. From the opposite edge to the seat was laid a plank, upon which silent Mary could cross and there sit under an awning and surrounded by the water. Martha went to her and bade her come down into the garden, for there someone was waiting to speak to her. Silent Mary was very obedient. Without a word, she threw her veil around her and followed her sister into the garden. Then Martha retired. Mary was tall and very beautiful.

She was about thirty years old. She generally kept her eyes fixed on Heaven. If occasionally she glanced to one side where Jesus was, it was only a side glance and vaguely, as if she were gazing into the distance. Even when speaking of herself, she never used the pronoun, but always as if she saw herself as a second person and spoke accordingly. She did not address Jesus nor cast herself at His feet. Jesus was the first to salute, and they walked together around the garden. Properly speaking, they did not converse together. Silent Mary kept her gaze fixed on high and recounted heavenly things, as if passing before her eyes. Jesus spoke in the same manner of His Father and to His Father. Mary never looked at Jesus, though while speaking she sometimes half turned to the side upon which He was walking. There was more a prayer, a song of praise, a contemplation, a revealing of mysteries than a conversation. Mary appeared as if ignorant of her own existence. Her soul was in another world while her body lived on earth.



Of their speech during that interview, I can remember that, glancing intuitively upon the Incarnation of Christ, they spoke as if gazing upon the Most Holy Trinity acting in that mystery. Their simple, and yet profoundly significant words I cannot recall. Mary gazing upon it, said, "The Father commissioned the Son to go down to mankind, among whom a Virgin should conceive Him." Then she described the rejoicings of the angels, and how Gabriel was sent to the Virgin. And so she ran through the nine angelic choirs, who all came down with the bearer of the glad tidings, just as a child would joyously describe a procession moving before its eyes, praising the devotion and zeal of all that composed it. Then she seemed to glance into the chamber of the Virgin, to whom she spoke words expressive of her hope that she might receive the Angel's message. She saw the Angel arrive and announce the coming of the Saviour. She saw all and repeated all, as if uttering her thoughts aloud, gazing the while into the distance.

Suddenly she paused, her eyes fixed on the Virgin who appeared to be recollecting herself before replying to the Angel, and said very simply, "Then, thou hast made a vow of virginity? Ah, if thou hadst refused to be the Lord's Mother, what would have happened? Would there have been found another virgin?" Then addressing her nation, she exclaimed: "Had the Virgin refused, long wouldst thou, O orphaned Israel, still have groaned!" And now, filled with joy by the Virgin's consent, she burst forth into words of praise and thanksgiving, rehearsed the wonders of Jesus' birth and, addressing the Divine Child, said, "Butter and honey shalt Thou eat." She again repeated the Prophecies, recalled those of Simeon and Anna, etc., spoke with the different personages connected with them, and all this as if gazing upon those scenes, contemporary with them. At last, descending to the present, she said, speaking as if alone: "Now goest Thou on the painful, bitter way," etc.

Although she knew that the Lord was at her side, yet she acted and spoke as if He were no nearer to her than all the other visions just recounted. Jesus interrupted her from time to time with prayer and thanksgiving, praising His Father and interceding for mankind. The whole interview was inexpressibly touching and wonderful. Jesus left her. Relapsing into her usual silence and exterior apathy, she returned to the house. When Jesus went back to Lazarus and Martha, He said to them something like the following: "She is not without understanding, but her soul is not of this world. She sees not this world, and this world comprehends her not. She is happy. She knows no sin."

Silent Mary, in her altogether spiritual state of contemplation, was really and truly oblivious to all that happened to her or around her. She was always thus abstracted. She had never before spoken in the presence of others as she had just done in that of Jesus. Before all others she kept silence, though not from pride or reserve. No; it was because she saw not those people interiorly, saw not what they saw, but gazed upon Redemption and the things of Heaven alone. When at times accosted by a learned and pious friend of the family, she would indeed utter some words audibly, though without understanding a single word of what had been said to her. Not having reference to or connection with the vision upon which she was interiorly gazing at the time, she heard without hearing; consequently her reply, bearing upon what was then engrossing her own attention, mystified her hearers. It was for this reason that she was regarded by the family as a simpleton. Her state necessitated her dwelling alone, for her soul lived not in time. She cultivated her little garden and embroidered for the Temple.

Martha brought her her work. She was skillful with her needle, which she plied in uninterrupted musing and meditation. She prayed most piously and devoutly, and endured a kind of expiatory suffering for the sins of others, for her soul was often oppressed as if the weight of the whole world was upon her. Her dwelling was comfortably fitted up with sofas and different kinds of furniture. She ate little and always alone. She died of grief at the immensity of Jesus' Passion, which in spirit she foresaw.

Martha spoke to Jesus of Magdalen and her own great anxiety on her account. Jesus comforted her, telling her that Magdalen would certainly be converted, but that she must on no account weary of praying for her and exhorting her to change her life.

At about half-past one the Blessed Virgin arrived with Mary Chusa, Lea, Mary Salome, and Mary Cleophas. The servant had in advance announced their approach. Martha, Seraphia, Mary Marcus, and Susanna proceeded to that hall at the entrance of the castle where Jesus the day before had been received by Lazarus. They took with them refreshments and the vessels necessary for washing their guests' feet. After welcoming the newly-arrived and performing for them that duty of hospitality, the latter changed their dress, lowered their skirts, and put on fresh veils. All were clothed in undyed wool, yellowish-white or brownish. They partook of a light refreshment, and then accompanied Martha to her house.

Jesus and the men now presented themselves to salute the holy women,

after which Jesus retired for an interview with the Blessed Virgin. He told her most earnestly and lovingly that He was about to begin His career, that He was now going to John's baptism whence He would return and once more be with her for a short time in the region of Samaria, but that then He would retire to the desert for forty days. When Mary heard Him speak of the desert, she became very uneasy. She besought Him not to go to so frightful a place where He would die of hunger and thirst. Jesus replied that henceforth she should not seek to deter Him by human considerations, for He must accomplish what was marked out for Him; a very different life was now about to commence for Him, and they who would adhere to Him must suffer with Him; that He must now fulfill His mission, and she must sacrifice all purely personal claims upon Him. He added that although He would love her as ever, yet He was now for all mankind. She should do as He said and His Heavenly Father would reward her, for what Simeon had foretold was about to be fulfilled—a sword should pierce her soul. The Blessed Virgin listened gravely. She was very much troubled, though at the same time strong in her resignation to God, for Jesus was very tender and loving.

That evening Lazarus gave a feast to which Simon the Pharisee, and some others of the sect were invited. The women ate in an adjacent room, which was separated by a grating from the men's dining hall, but within hearing of all that Jesus said. He taught of faith, hope, charity, and obedience. He said that they who desired to follow Him must not look back. They should practice what He taught and suffer the trials that might befall them, but that He would never abandon them. He again alluded to the thorny path before Him, to the buffetings and persecutions He would have to undergo, and impressed upon them the fact, that whoever called themselves His friends, would have to suffer with Him. His hearers, deeply touched, listened in wonder to His words, but what He said in allusion to His bitter Passion they did not rightly understand. They did not take His words in their simple and literal meaning, but looked upon them as the figurative expressions of prophecy. The Pharisees present, though less favorably disposed than the others, found nothing to carp at in Jesus' speech. This time, however, He spoke very moderately.