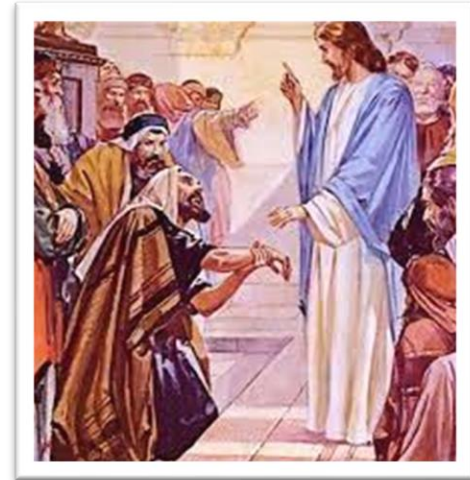


Cure of a Man with a Withered Hand. “Blessed is the Womb that Bore Thee!”

When Jesus went to the synagogue to teach, the Pharisees laid a snare for Him. In a corner of the synagogue was a poor creature with a withered hand. He had not ventured to appear before Jesus, and now held back, intimidated by the presence of the Pharisees. These latter were reproaching Jesus, asking Him how He could make His appearance with a publican like Matthew. To this Jesus responded that He had come to console and convert sinners, but that no Pharisee should ever be numbered among His disciples. The Pharisees mockingly retorted: “Master, here is one for whom Thou hast come. Perhaps, Thou wilt heal him also.” Thereupon Jesus commanded the man with the withered hand to come forward and stand in the midst of the assembly.



He did so, and Jesus said to him: “Thy sins are forgiven thee!” The Pharisees, who scorned the poor man—whose reputation was not of the best—cried out: “His withered hand has never hindered him from sinning.” Then Jesus grasped the hand, straightened the fingers, and said: “Use thy hand!” The man stretched out his hand, found it cured, and went away giving thanks. Jesus justified him against the calumnies of the Pharisees, expressed compassion for him, and declared him a good-hearted fellow. The Pharisees were covered with confusion and filled with wrath. They declared Jesus a Sabbath-breaker against whom they would lodge an accusation, and then took their departure. In the neighborhood of the synagogue they met some Herodians with whom they consulted as to how they should lie in wait for Jesus on the next feast in Jerusalem.

When Jesus later on addressed the people in Peter’s house, among the other women present was Lea, the sister-in-law of Enue, recently cured of the issue of blood. Her husband was a Pharisee and a zealous opponent of Jesus, but Lea herself was profoundly impressed by the instructions she had heard. I saw her at first, calm and sorrowful, often changing her place among the crowd, as if looking for someone, but I found out that she was in this way obeying the impulse that prompted her to proclaim aloud her reverence for Jesus. Then approached the Mother of Jesus accompanied by several women, namely, Martha, Susanna of Jerusalem, Dina the Samaritan, and Susanna Alpheus, a daughter of Mary Cleophas and sister of the Apostles. She was

about thirty and had grown children. Her husband lived in Nazareth, and it was there that she had joined the holy women. Susanna Cleophas desired to be admitted among the Community of women that rendered service to Jesus and His disciples. Mary and her companions entered the court that led to the hall in which Jesus was teaching. He had been reproaching the Pharisees with their hypocrisy and impurity and, because He always interwove some of the Beatitudes with His other teachings, He just at that moment exclaimed: "Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God!" Lea, meanwhile, seeing Mary coming in, could no longer restrain herself and, as if intoxicated with joy, she cried out from among the crowd: "More blessed" (these are the exact words that I heard) "more blessed the womb that bore Thee and the breasts that gave Thee suck!" To which I saw Jesus quietly replying: "And far more blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it!" and He went on with His discourse. Lea went to Mary, saluted her, spoke of Enue's cure and of her own resolve to give her wealth to the Community, and requested Mary to intercede with her Son for her husband's conversion. He was a Pharisee of Paneas. Mary conversed with her in a low voice. She had not heard Lea's sudden exclamation nor Jesus' reply, and soon she withdrew with the women.

Mary was possessed of admirable simplicity. Jesus never showed her any marks of distinction before others, excepting that He treated her with reverence. She never had much to do with any, unless with the sick and the ignorant, and her demeanor was always marked by humility, recollection, and simplicity. All, even the enemies of Jesus, honored her; and yet she never sought after anyone, but was always quiet and alone.

Jesus went next to Peter's fishery where, before a great crowd of people, He taught in parables of the Kingdom of God. Then He mounted His little barque and taught from the lake. A Scribe from Nazareth named Saraseth proposed himself as a disciple, when Jesus repeated to him the words: "The foxes have their holes, etc." Saraseth afterward married Salome, the daughter of Jairus.

After Jesus' death, both husband and wife joined the Community. Besides this Scribe, there were two others who for some time followed Jesus as disciples. One of them asked Him whether He would not soon take possession of His Kingdom, for He had already sufficiently proved His mission. Would He not soon seat Himself upon the throne of David? Jesus having reprimanded him and ordered him to follow Him with docility, he

replied that he would first go and take leave of his family. To this Jesus responded: "Whoever puts his hands to the plough, etc." A third, who had joined Jesus at Sephoris, expressed his wish to go and bury his father. Jesus replied: "Let the dead bury their dead." These words were not spoken literally, for his father was not yet dead. It was an expression which meant receiving one's share of the patrimony and providing for one's parents.

Jesus spent that night on the mountain near Corozain with two of the disciples, under a tent and in prayer. The other disciples came next morning to the sermon. Jesus explained today the fourth Beatitude and this passage from Isaias: "Behold My servant, I will uphold him: My elect, My soul delighteth in him. I have given My Spirit upon him, he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles." The multitude was very great. There was present a troop of Roman soldiers from the different garrisons around the country.

They had been sent to hear Jesus' doctrines, to note His bearing, and to give information on the same. From Gaul and other provinces of the Empire they had written to Rome for news of the Prophet of Judea, because this last named country was under the Roman sway. Rome had in consequence made inquiries of the officers of the different garrisons, and these latter had now sent about a hundred of their trusty soldiers, who stood where they could both see and hear well.

The instruction over, Jesus went with the disciples down the mountain to the valley on the south. Here there was a spring, and here too had bread and fish been prepared by the holy women who devoted themselves to such services. The multitude had encamped on the mountainside. Many of them were without provisions, and they sent some of their number to beg food of the disciples. The bread and fish were arranged in baskets on a grassy mound.

Jesus blessed the baskets and helped the disciples to distribute their contents to all that asked. It was apparently far from enough, and yet all received what they needed. I heard the people saying: "It is multiplied in His hands." The Roman soldiers also asked for some of the blessed bread, for they wanted to send it to Rome as a testimony of what they had seen and heard. Jesus ordered what remained to be given to them, and there was still enough for all the leaders. They wrapped it up carefully and took it away with them.