

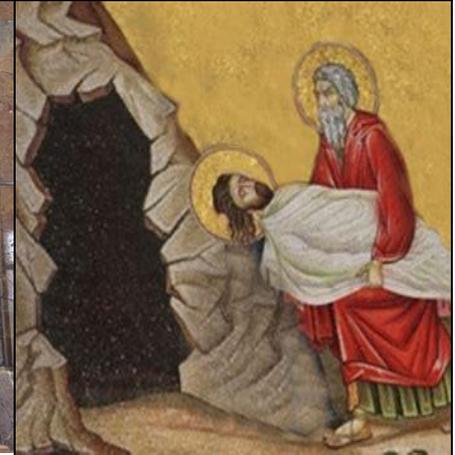
MARIA VALTORTA READERS' GROUP
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JESUS AND NICODEMUS



JOSEPH & NICODEMUS



JOSEPH OF ARIMATHEA

THE TWO SECRET APOSTLES

JOSEPH OF ARIMATHEA

(When we first meet Joseph, the noble member of the Supreme Council who is buying a lamb from the merchants in the Temple, his attitude towards the poor is not unlike others.) The man whose name is Joseph the Elder, that is, Joseph of Arimathea, enters the enclosure and picks a magnificent lamb. He passes by, stately and proud, magnificently dressed, without even looking at the poor old people weeping at the gate, that is, the enclosure entrance. He almost bumps into them when he goes out with the fat, bleating lamb. **(P1, 286; G1, 344-5)**

LAZARUS DESCRIBES JOSEPH & NICODEMUS

(Maria says:) [...] Jesus is at Lazarus' [house and I] understand that there has been a kind of meeting of friends, still loyal to Lazarus, who has invited them so that they may meet Jesus. Speaking of Joseph of Arimathea, Lazarus defines him 'a true and just Israelite'. Lazarus says to Jesus: « Joseph dare not say so because he is afraid of the Sanhedrin, of which he is a member, and which already hates You. But he hopes to see in You the One Predicted by the Prophets. He spontaneously asked me if he could come to meet You and form his own opinion of You, as he did not think that what Your enemies said about You was right... Pharisees have come from as far as Galilee to accuse You of sin. But Joseph's evaluation was: "He who works miracles has God with him. He who has God cannot be in sin. Nay, he can but be one loved by God". » Lazarus says: « Also Nicodemus (who is the head of the Judeans) is good. »

(P1, 604-13; G2, 23-38)

A GATHERING AT THE HOUSE OF JOSEPH

Jesus attends a banquet at the house of Joseph of Arimathea. [...] Before Jesus reaches the boundary of the house [...], Joseph of Arimathea in his wide, fringed robe comes to meet Him and bows very low with his arms folded on his chest [...].

« Come in, Master. You have made me happy by accepting my invitation. I was not expecting so much compliance from You. »

« Why not? [...] You are a soul seeking the truth. The Truth, therefore, does not reject you. »

« Are You the Truth? »

« I am the Way, the Life and the Truth. Whoever loves and follows Me will have the certain Way, the blessed Life and will know God; because God, besides being Love and Justice, is Truth. »

« You are a great Doctor. Wisdom emanates from every word of Yours. » **(P1, 604-13; G2, 239-47)**

NICODEMUS FIRST MEETS JESUS SECRETLY

« Master, here is Nicodemus » says John going in first. « Master, forgive me if I wanted to speak to You in secret. I do not trust many people with regard to You and myself. I am not acting entirely out of cowardice. It is also prudence and the desire to be of greater assistance to You, than if I belonged to You openly. You have many enemies. I am one of the few here who admire You. [...At] the last discussions at the Sanhedrin about You, Joseph, who was beside me, whispered: "Be quiet. Do not let us disclose our thoughts. I will explain later". And when we came out he said: "It is better that way. If they know that we are His disciples, they will keep us in the dark about their thoughts and decisions, and will be able to harm Him and us. If, instead, they think that we are only inquiring into His life, they will not resort to subterfuges". »

(P1, 621; G2, 258)

AT THE ESTATE OF NICODEMUS

Jesus arrives there at dawn, when the air is fresh and cool. And the fertile fields of good Nicodemus are beautiful in the early sunshine. They are beautiful notwithstanding that the corn has been cut in many of them. [...]

Farmers are already busy at their work. They are happy because the hard work of harvest time is almost over... There are several groups of well-fed peasants who are happy to work for their good master. At the edges of the fields or behind the reapers, there are children, widows, old people, waiting to glean and they are waiting peacefully, because they know that there is plenty for everybody, as is customary, "by Nicodemus' order", as a widow explains to Jesus, Who had asked her.

« He watches to ensure that a large number of ears are deliberately not tied in the sheaves, and left for us » she says. « And not satisfied with so much charity, after taking a just quantity of corn in proportion to the seed, he gives

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out the rest to us. Oh! He does not wait for the Sabbatical year to do that! But he always does that to help the poor with his crops, and he does the same with his olive-trees and vineyards. That is why God blesses him with wonderful harvests. [...] And he told us that this year the whole lot will be given to us because this is a year of grace. I do not know to which grace he refers. [...] He is secretly a disciple of Him, Who is said to be the Christ, and preaches one should love the poor in order to show love to God... [Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea] go round the country evangelizing the reapers. »

Nicodemus, with his tunic tucked up, is coming forward without noticing the Master and he tells the peasants not to pick up any of the ears that have been cut. « We have enough bread for ourselves... Let us give the gift of God to those who have none. And let us give it to them without any fear. A late frost might have destroyed our crops but not one seed has been lost. Let us give God's bread back to Him by giving it to His unhappy children. And I can assure you that next year's harvest will be even more plentiful, ten times richer, because He said so, "an overflowing measure will be given to those who give". »

Jesus, half-hidden by a curtain of canes near a partition ditch, approves and smiles. The more Nicodemus approaches Him, the more He smiles, as their meeting and the disciple's surprise are now very close at hand.

In fact Nicodemus jumps over the ditch to go into other fields... and becomes petrified before Jesus Who stretches His arms towards him. At last he recovers his power of speech: « Holy Master, may You be blessed. How come You are here with me? »

« To become acquainted with you, if there was any such need, through the words of the most sincere witnesses: those whom you overwhelm with charity... »

Nicodemus is on his knees, prostrated on the ground. And also the disciples, led by Stephen and Joseph from Emmaus on the mountains, are on their knees. The peasants and the poor people present understand and they all prostrate themselves venerating the Master, seized with astonishment.

[...] « ... I am not a prophet. But I am not a fool. And a light from Heaven was added to my intelligence. My Master... I wanted the poor to enjoy the gifts of God, while God is still among the poor... And I dared not hope to have You, to give a sweet flavour and sanctifying power to these crops, to my olive groves, vineyards and orchards, which will be for the poor children of God, my brothers... But now that You are here, raise Your blessed hand and bless them, so that with the nourishment of the body, the holiness emanating from You may descend into those who will feed on them. »

« Yes, Nicodemus. Yours is a just desire approved of by Heaven. » And Jesus opens His arms to bless.

« Oh! Wait! That I may call the peasants » and with a whistle he whistles three times and the shrill sound spreads in the calm air causing reapers, gleaners and curious people to rush from everywhere. A little crowd...

Jesus opens His arms and says: « Through the power of the Lord, for the desire of his servant, may the grace of health, both of soul and body, descend upon every grain, every grape, olive and fruit, and may it prosper and sanctify those who eat of them with good spirit, free from

concupiscence and hatred, and willing to serve the Lord by obeying His divine perfect Will. »

« So be it » reply Nicodemus, Andrew, James, Stephen and the other disciples... « So be it » reply the people of the crowd standing up, as they had knelt down to be blessed.

(P3 771-6; G6, 334-40)

AT THE ESTATE OF JOSEPH OF ARIMATHEA.

Jesus in fact has not gone to Arimathea, but to Joseph's estate in the plain, towards the sea [...]. In the middle of the bare fields there is a low, wide white house: a country house, but well kept. Its four threshing-floors are being filled with sheaves arranged in groups [...]. Numerous carts carry the precious goods from the fields to the threshing-floors, where many men unload them and pile them up.

: « Master, we have finished. All the corn is on your threshing-floors. This is the last cart of the last field. »

« Very well. Unload the cart, unyoke the oxen and take them to the watering place and then to the stables. They have worked hard and deserve a rest. And you all have done a good job and deserve a rest. But the last job will be a light one because kind hearts are relieved by the joy of other people. We shall now get the children of God to come here and we will give them the gift of the Father. Abraham, go and call them » he then says addressing a patriarchal peasant, who is perhaps the first of the peasant servants in Joseph's estate. [...]

And the old man goes... [...] and then comes out followed by a miserable heterogeneous crowd of people of every age... and of every degree of misery. There are emaciated people but without any physical defect, and there are cripples, blind and maimed persons, and people with diseased eyes... Many widows with little orphans around them, and wives of sick men, sad, shabby, feeble through waking and sacrificing themselves to cure their husbands. They come forward with the typical aspect of poor people going to a place where they will be assisted.

[...] And when the unhappy crowd is before him, Joseph begins to walk up and down their lines, calling them one by one, asking how many they are in the family, how long have they been widows, or ill and so on... and he takes notes. And for each case he gives instructions to the peasant servants: « Give ten. Give thirty. Give sixty » he says after listening to an almost blind old man who comes up to him with seventeen grandchildren, all under twelve, the children of a son and a daughter of his who died, the former at reaping time the previous year, the latter of childbirth. « Give sixty to the old father. And you, father, wait here, later I will give you some clothes for the little ones. »

The servant points out that if they continue to give sixty sheaves every time, there will not be enough corn for everybody...

« And where is your faith? Am I perhaps storing up the sheaves for myself and sharing them out? No. No they are for the children dearest to the Lord. The Lord Himself will see that there is enough for everybody » replies Joseph to the servant.

« Yes, master. But numbers are numbers... »

« And faith is faith. And to show you that faith can do everything,

I order you to double the quantities given to the first ones. Let him who had ten have ten more, and who had twenty,

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twenty more and give the old man one hundred and twenty. Go! Do that! »

The servants shrug their shoulders and carry out the order. And the distribution continues while the amazed beneficiaries rejoice seeing that they are receiving a quantity that exceeds the most optimistic hopes. And Joseph smiles, caressing the little ones who are busy helping their mothers, or he helps the cripples who are arranging their little piles, he helps those who are too old to do so, or the women who are too emaciated, and he has two sick people put to one side to let them have further assistance, as he did the old man with seventeen grandchildren.

Joseph asks: « How many sheaves are there still left? [...] Well? Have you seen? There was enough for everybody! And with surplus! »

« Master! There is a mystery here! Our fields cannot have yielded all the sheaves that you have distributed. I was born here and I am seventy-eight years old. I have been reaping for sixty-six. And I know. My son is right. Without a mystery we could not have given so much!... »

« But it is a matter of fact that we have given them, Abraham. You were beside me. The sheaves were handed out by the servants. There is no sorcery. It is not a dream. You can still count the sheaves. They are still there, although divided into many lots. »

« Yes, master. But... It is not possible that the fields have yielded so many! »

« And what about faith, my children? What about faith? What shall we do with our faith? Could the Lord belie His servant who made a promise in His Name and for a holy purpose? »

« Then, you have worked a miracle?! » exclaim the servants, ready to sing hosannas.

« I am not the type of man who works miracles. I am a poor man. The Lord worked it. He read my heart and saw two wishes in it: the first one was to lead you to my faith. The second was to give much, so much to these unhappy brothers of mine. God consented to my desires... and He worked. May He be blessed for that! » says Joseph bowing reverently as if he were before an altar...

« And His servant with Him » says Jesus Who has been in hiding hitherto behind the corner of a little house surrounded by a hedge; I do not know whether it is the bake house or the oil-mill. And He now appears openly on the threshing-floor, where Joseph is standing.

« My Master and my Lord!! » exclaims Joseph falling on his knees to venerate Jesus.

« Peace to you. I have come to bless you in the name of the Father, and to reward your charity and your faith. I shall be your guest this evening. Do you want Me? »

[...] « Oh! Master! I want everything You want! Tell me. »

« Tell them to gather together, and get the servants also to assemble here. »

The astonished people crowd around quickly...

Jesus says: « You have realised here that faith can multiply corn when such desire is based on a desire of love. But do not confine your faith to material necessities. God created the first grain of wheat and since then wheat ears for the bread of men. But God created also Paradise and it awaits its citizens. It was created for those who live according to the Law and remain faithful notwithstanding the sorrowful trials of life. Have faith and you will be able

to remain holy with the help of the Lord, just as Joseph was able to allot a double quantity of corn to make you happy twice and confirm his servants in the faith. I solemnly tell you that if man had faith in the Lord, and if it were for a just reason, not even mountains, the rocky bowels of which are rooted in the earth, could resist, and they would shift from one place to another at the order of anyone who has faith in the Lord. Have you faith in God? » He asks addressing everybody.

« Yes, Lord! »

[...] And Jesus smiles, caresses, blesses... He slowly frees Himself, and still followed by the people, He disappears into the house while hosannas rise in the sky.

(P3, 777-82; G6, 346-8)

THE ARREST OF JESUS

(*Jesus has been arrested in the night and taken before the Sanhedrin*) There is a little turmoil, and Nicodemus and Joseph take advantage of it to speak in favour of the Martyr (Jesus).

« Gamaliel is right. The time and the place are illicit, and the charges are not consistent. Can anybody accuse Him of having notoriously despised the Law? I am a friend of His and I swear that I have always found Him to be respectful of the Law » says Nicodemus.

« And I, too. And in order not to assent to a crime, I cover my head, not for Him, but for us, and I go out. » And Joseph of Arimathea is about to come down from his seat and go out.

But Caiaphas shouts: « Ah! Is that what you say? Then let the sworn witnesses come. And listen to them. Then you will go away. »

Then two jail-bird figures come in. Elusive looks, cruel sneers, sly ways.

« Speak up. »

« It is not lawful to listen to both at the same time » shouts Joseph.

« I am the High Priest. I give orders. Be silent! »

Joseph strikes the table with his fist and says: « May the fire of Heaven fall upon you! As from this moment, be aware that Joseph the Elder is an enemy of the Sanhedrin and a friend of the Christ. And I am going at once to inform the Praetor that a man is being sentenced to death here without the approval of Rome. » and he rushes out giving a violent push to a young thin scribe who would like to hold him back.

Nicodemus goes out more calmly without saying a word. And when going out, he passes in front of Jesus and looks at Him...Another turmoil. They are afraid of Rome. And Jesus is always the expiating victim.

« See, all this is happening through Your fault, You corrupter of the best Judaeans. You have prostituted them. » says Caiaphas

Jesus is silent.

(P5, 550-3; G10, 52-3)

AT CALVARY

Jesus' sufferings increase more and more. And the light fades more and more. It is in this sea-bottom light that Nicodemus and Joseph appear from behind some Judaeans, and they say: « Step aside! »

« You are not allowed. What do you want? » ask the soldiers.

« To pass. We are friends of the Christ. »

The chief priests turn round. « Who dare profess himself friend of the rebel? » ask the priests indignantly.

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And Joseph replies resolutely: « I, Joseph of Arimathea, the Elder, and noble member of the Supreme Council, and Nicodemus the head of the Judaeans, is with me. »

« Those who side with the rebel are rebels. »

« And those who take sides with murderers, are murderers, Eleazar of Annas. I have lived as a just man. And now I am old and close to death. I do not want to become unjust while Heaven is already descending upon me and the eternal Judge with it. »

« And you, Nicodemus! I'm surprised! »

« So am I. And of one thing only: that Israel is so corrupt that you cannot even recognise God any more. »

« You disgust me. »

« Move aside, then, and let me pass. That is all I want. »

« To become even more contaminated? »

« If I have not become contaminated being with you, nothing else will ever contaminate me. Soldier, here is the purse and my pass. » And he gives the Decurion who is closest to him, a purse and a waxed board.

The Decurion examines them and says to the soldiers: « Let the two men pass. »

And Joseph and Nicodemus approach the shepherds. I do not even know whether Jesus can see them in the thick fog that is getting thicker and thicker, and with His eyes that are already veiled by agony. But they see Him and they weep without any respect for public opinion, although the priests now abuse them. **(P5, 616; G10, 132-3)**

JESUS' BODY

The soldiers are speaking in low voices to one another.

« What a fright! I have seen other earthquakes. But never like this one. Look: the ground is full of fissures. »

« Oh! another fire! In the country... »

« But is He really dead? »

« Can't you see? Do you doubt it? »

Joseph and Nicodemus appear from behind the rock. They had certainly taken shelter there, behind the protection of the mountain, to save themselves from the thunderbolts. They go to Longinus. « We want the Corpse. »

« Only the Proconsul can grant it. Go quick because I heard that the Judaeans want to go to the Praetorium to obtain permission to fracture His legs. I would not like them to disfigure His body. »

« How do you know? »

« A report of the ensign. Go. I will wait. »

The two men rush down the steep road and disappear.

(P5, 623; G10, 141)

THE BURIAL OF JESUS

(*Maria says:*) I am present at Our Lord's burial. The little procession, after descending Calvary, at the foot of it finds the sepulchre of Joseph of Arimathea, hewn out of the limestone of the mountain. The compassionate disciples enter it with Jesus' Body.

I see the sepulchre made as follows. It is a room dug in the stone at the end of a vegetable garden all in blossom. It looks like a grotto, but it is evident that it has been dug by man. There is the burial room proper with its loculi (they are different from those of the catacombs). These are like round cavities that penetrate into the stone like the cells of a beehive, to give an idea. At present they are all empty. The empty opening of each loculus looks like a black spot on the grey stone. Before this room, there is a kind of anteroom, in the middle of which there is a slab of

stone for anointing. Jesus is placed on it, enveloped in His sheet. Also John and Mary go in. But nobody else because the preparatory room is small, and if more people were in it, they would not be able to move. The other women are near the door that is near the opening because there is not a proper door. **(P5: 628-9; G10, 148-9)**

A CLASH WITH HELKAI

They are now at the little bridge that leads to the steep Calvary road. And, in front of it, there is the Judicial Gate. Before disappearing in there, Mary turns round to look at the top of Calvary... and She weeps desolately. Then She says: « Let us go. But lead Me. I do not want to see Jerusalem, its streets, its inhabitants. »

« Yes, but let us be quick. They are about to close the Gates and, see? Their guards have been reinforced. Rome is afraid of turmoils. »

[Mary asks:] Why are you stopping? What does that man want of Joseph? What is he saying? »

Joseph, in fact, has been stopped by one of the rare passersby, and in the dead silence of the deserted town, their words are heard very clearly.

« It is known that you have entered Pilate's house. You are a violator of the Law. You will answer for that. Passover is interdicted to you! You are contaminated. »

« And you, too, Helkai. You have touched me and I am all covered with the blood of Christ and with the sweat of His death! »

« Ha! horror! Away, away with that blood! »

« Be not afraid. It has already abandoned and cursed you. »

« And you as well, you cursed one. And now that you are flirting with Pilate, don't think that you can take the Corpse away. We have taken the necessary steps to ensure that the story comes to an end. »

Nicodemus has approached them slowly, while the women have stopped with John, leaning against a closed portal.

« We have seen that » replies Joseph. « Cowards! You are afraid even of a dead body! But of my vegetable garden and of my sepulchre, I do what I like. »

« We shall see. »

« We shall see. I will appeal to Pilate. »

« Yes. Fornicate with Rome, now. »

Nicodemus moves forward: « Better with Rome than with the Demon, as you, deicides, do! In any case, tell me: how come you are plucking up courage again? A moment ago you were running away, a prey to terror. Are you recovering already? Is what you had not sufficient yet? Was your house not burnt down? Tremble! The Punishment is not over, on the contrary it is coming. Like the Nemesis of the heathens, it is impending over you. Neither guards or seals will prevent the Avenger from rising and striking. »

« Cursed! » Helkai runs away and goes and knocks against the women. He realises that and utters a dreadful insult against Mary.

John does not say one word. With the leap of a panther, he clings to him and knocks him down and, pressing him with knees and holding his hands round his neck, he says to him: « Ask Her to forgive you or I will strangle you, you demon. » And he does not relax his hold until the other, pressed and half choked by John's hands, utters gaspingly: « Forgive me. »

But his cry has attracted the attention of the patrol. « Halt there! What's happening? Further seditions? Stand still, all of you, or you will be struck. Who are you? »

« Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, who have been authorised by the Proconsul to bury the Nazarene Who has been put to death, and we are coming back from the sepulchre with His Mother, a son and women relatives and friends. This man offended the Mother and has been compelled to ask Her forgiveness. »

« Only that? You should have cut his throat. You may go. Soldiers, arrest that man. What else do these vampires want? Also the hearts of mothers? Hail Judaeans! »

(P5, 643-4; G10, 166-7)

THE VEIL OF VERONICA

Mary weeps, caressing the Face of the image, because She is now sitting near the chest on which the veronica is spread. Joseph and Nicodemus come. And they spare the women the trouble of going out to buy myrrh and aloe, because they have brought some little bags of them. But their strength yields before the Face impressed on the linen cloth and the ravaged face of the Mother. They sit in a corner after greeting Her and they become silent. They are grave, gloomy... Later they go away.

(P5,679; G10, 212-3)

THE TWO SHROUDS OF THE LORD.

It is night-time. [...] Three people appear from the clump of trees and they direct their steps towards the little house. They knock at the door.

A lamp is lit and a faint flickering light filters through a fissure in the door. A hand opens, a head looks out, a voice, John's, asks: « Who are you? »

« Joseph of Arimathea. And with me are Nicodemus and Lazarus. The hour is indiscreet. But prudence has forced it on us. We have brought something for Mary, and Lazarus has escorted us. »

[...] « We have decided to come to give You a thing that - now we know for a certainty, but we had already had a foreboding of it - You wished to have. [...] » explains Joseph. [...] « We want You to be able, also with regard to the previous one, to have this souvenir of Him to be shown to the believers, in order to confirm them in their faith, without it grieving You too much. » And Joseph hands Her a bulky roll, that enveloped in a dark red cloth, he had held so far concealed under his mantle.

« What is it? » asks Mary, growing pale. « His garments, perhaps? The one I made for Him for... Oh!... » She says weeping.

« At no price could we find them any more. Who knows how and where they ended up! » replies Lazarus. And he adds: « But this is also His garment. His last one. It is the clean Shroud in which the most pure Lord was enveloped after His torture and after the purification, although hurried and relative, of His members soiled by His enemies and the summary embalming. When He rose, Joseph took both away from the Sepulchre and brought them to us at Bethany to avoid any sacrilegious abuse of them. Jesus' enemies will not dare too much in Lazarus' house. And less than ever, since they heard that Rome censured the action of Pontius Pilate. Then after the first days, the most dangerous ones, we gave You the first Shroud, and Nicodemus got the other and took it to his country house. »

« Really, Lazarus, they belonged to Joseph » remarks Mary.

« That is true, Woman. But Nicodemus' house is out of town, so it does not strike the eye so much and it is safer for other reasons » Joseph replies to Her.

[... Nicodemus adds] « Then, with regard to the Shrouds, since I am no longer a Hebrew and consequently no longer subject to the prohibition of Deuteronomy concerning carved images and castings, I was thinking of making a statue of Jesus crucified, as best I can - I will use one of my gigantic cedars of Lebanon - and of concealing one of the Shrouds inside it, the first one, if You, Mother, will give it back to us. It would always distress You too much to see it, because the filthiness with which Israel struck the Son of its God is visible on it. Further, certainly because of the shocks it received when descending from Golgotha, shocks that continuously shifted that tortured Head, the image is so confused that it is difficult to distinguish it. But that cloth, although the image is confused and it is dirty, is always dear and sacred to me, because on it there is always some of His blood and perspiration. Hidden in that sculpture it will always be safe, because no Israelite of the high castes will ever dare to touch a sculpture. But the other one, the second Shroud, which was on Him from the evening of Preparation Day until the dawn of the Resurrection, must come to You. And - I am warning You so that You may not be too deeply moved in seeing it - and you must be informed that the more the days passed, the more clearly His image appeared, as He was after being washed. When we collected it from the Sepulchre, it seemed that it simply retained the impression of His members covered with the oils, and, mixed with them, the drainage of blood and serum from the many wounds. But either through a natural process or, which is much more certain, by a supernatural will, a miracle of Him to give joy to You, the more time passed, the more precise and clear the impression has become. He is there on the cloth, handsome, imposing, even if wounded, serene, peaceful, also after so many tortures. Have You the courage to see it? »

« Oh! Nicodemus! That was My supreme desire! You say that His appearance is peaceful... Oh! to be able to see Him thus, not with the tortured expression that is on Nike's veil! » replies Mary, joining Her hands against Her heart.

Then the four shift the table to have more room; then, as Lazarus and John stand on one side, Nicodemus and Joseph on the other, they slowly unfold the long cloth. The lines are very clear, and clear are the signs, all the signs of the scourging, crowning with thorns, rubbing of the cross, bruises caused by blows received or by falls, and the wounds of the nails and of the lance.

Mary falls on Her knees, She kisses the cloth, She caresses those impressions, She kisses the wounds. She is distressed, but visibly happy to be able to have that supernatural miraculous image of Him.

« May God bless you all. ... » **(P5, 900-3; G10, 485-90)**

JESUS APPEARS TO MANAEN, JOSEPH & NICODEMUS

The voices of the three men (Manaen, Nicodemus and Joseph) mingle in the same cry: « He has risen! » They look at one another, surprised that they all know [...].

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« He appeared to Lazarus... It was almost the third hour. Lazarus seems transfigured to us. »

« Oh! Lazarus deserves it! We... » says Joseph.

« Yes. We are still encrusted with doubt and human thoughts, like a leper badly cured... And there is no one but He Who can say: "I want you to be cleansed!" So, now that He has risen, will He no longer speak to us, who are less perfect? » asks Nicodemus.

« And will He not work any more miracles, to punish the world, now that He is the One Who has Risen from death and from the miseries of the flesh? » asks Joseph again.

But their questions can have but one reply. His. And it does not come. The three remain dejected.

Then Manaen says: « Well. I am going to the Supper room. If they kill me, He will absolve my soul and I shall see Him in Heaven, if I do not see Him here, on the Earth. » and he gets up to go.

But, as he turns towards the door, the latter is brightly illuminated by the Divine Resurrected Lord, Who, with His open hands, in a gesture of an embrace, stops him saying: « Peace to you! Peace to you two! But remain where you are, you and Nicodemus. Joseph may still go, if he wishes so. But you have Me here, and I speak the word you requested: "I want you to be cleansed of what is still impure in your belief". Tomorrow you will go down to the town. You will go to the brothers. Goodbye. And may God be always with you. Thanks, Manaen. You have believed more than these two. So, thanks also to your spirit. I thank you two for your pity. But ensure that it may become something higher through a life of fearless faith. » Jesus disappears behind a dazzling incandescence.

The three are blissful and bewildered.

« But was it He? » asks Joseph.

« And did you not hear His voice? » replies Nicodemus.

« Also a spirit can have... a voice... You, Manaen, since you were so close to Him, what do you think? »

« A real body. Most handsome. He breathed. I could feel His breath. And He emitted heat. And then... His Wounds, I saw them. They looked as if they had been opened then. They did not bleed, but it was living flesh. Oh! do not doubt any more! So that He may not punish you. We have seen the Lord. I mean Jesus, Who has come back as glorious as His Nature wants! And... He still loves us... [...]. I have the blissful knowledge of the Face of God". »

(P5, 723-5; G10, 267-9)

JOSEPH GIVES GETHSEMANE GARDEN TO MARY

Joseph of Arimathea now begins to speak and says: « Woman, [...] we are aware that You do not intend to leave these places, where You have seen the perfect manifestation of the divine and human nature of Your Son, His total mortification, and His total glorification, through His Passion and Death as true Man, through His glorious Resurrection and Ascension, as true God. And we also know that You do not want to leave the apostles all alone, as You wish to be a Mother and guide to them in their first trials, You, the See of Divine Wisdom. You, the Spouse of the Spirit Revealer of the Eternal Truths. You, eternally beloved Daughter of the Father Who from eternity chose You as Mother of His Only-Begotten Son. You, the Mother of this Word of the Father, Who certainly taught You His infinite and most perfect Wisdom and Doctrine, even before He was in You, as a creature that was forming, or He was with You as a Son Who grows in age and wisdom

to such an extent as to become the Master of masters. [...] Lazarus and I, immediately after the Death and Resurrection, began to build a wall around my kitchen garden near Golgotha and at Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives, so that those places sanctified by the Divine Martyr's Blood, that dropped, alas! warmed by fever at Gethsemane, and frozen and clotted in my garden, may not be profaned by Jesus' enemies. The work has now been completed, and both Lazarus and I, and his sisters with him and the apostles, who would suffer too much not having You here any longer, say to You: "Take up Your abode in the house of Jonah and Mary, the keepers of Gethsemane". »

« And Jonah and Mary? That house is a small one, and I love solitude. I have always loved it. And I love it even more now, because I need it to get lost in God, in My Jesus, so that I may not die of anguish, not having Him here any longer. [...] »

Lazarus interrupts Her: « It has already been done, o Blessed Mother! We have already seen to it. »

« But the olive-grove? It needs to be taken care of! » Mary replies to him.

« Only when it is time to prune, to plough and pick the olives. So, only a few days each year and which will be even fewer, because in those periods I will send my servants from Bethany with Mark. »

« But the oil-mill?... »

« It has already been transferred to Bethany. Gethsemane, completely enclosed, the property even more reserved of Lazarus of Theophilus, is awaiting You, Mary. And I assure You that the enemies of Jesus, out of fear of Rome, will not dare to violate its peace and Yours. »

« Oh! since it is so! » exclaims Mary. And She presses Her hands against Her heart, and looks at them, with a countenance that is almost ecstatic, so blissful it is, with an angelic smile on Her lips and tears of joy on Her fair eyelashes. She continues: « John and I! Alone! We two all alone! I shall seem to be once again at Nazareth with My Son! Alone! In peace! In that peace! Where My Jesus gave forth so many words and so much spirit of peace! [...] I will remain. Yes. I will remain here. I will go to Gethsemane. And from there, walking along the outside of the walls, I shall be able to go to Golgotha, and to your kitchen garden, Joseph, where I wept so much, and I shall be able to come to your house, Lazarus, where I have always had so much love, in My Son first, and then for Myself. » [...]

« And this is the key of the enclosure of my kitchen garden. » says Joseph. **(P5, 890-4; G10, 473-8)**

THE LAST WORD FROM JESUS

Joseph of Arimathea, and even more Nicodemus, did not trample on the Judaic customs and lianas at once and embrace the new Doctrine openly, so much so that they used to come to the Christ "secretly", out of fear of the Judaeans, or they used to meet with him by chance, and mainly in their country houses, or in Lazarus' house at Bethany, as they knew that it was safer and more feared by Christ's enemies, who were well aware of the protection of Rome for Theophilus' son (Lazarus). However, they are braver when compared to Gamaliel, that they dared to take the compassionate action on Good Friday. **(P5, 911; G10, 499)**