

MARIA VALTORTA READERS' GROUP
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THE SHEPHERD MATTHIAS BECOMES THE TWELFTH APOSTLE

THE SHEPHERDS VISIT BABY JESUS

(The 12 shepherds visit Jesus, Mary and Joseph in the stable.)

(Mary says:) « May God reward You. I will remember you, Elias, and every one of you. »

« Will You tell Your Baby about us? »

« I certainly will. »

« I am Elias. »

« And I am Levi. »

« And I am Samuel. »

« And I Jonah. »

« And I Isaac. »

« **And I Tobias.** » (who changes his name to Matthias)

« And I Jonathan. »

« And I Daniel. »

« And I Simeon. »

« My name is John. »

« I am Joseph and my brother Benjamin, we are twins. »

« I will remember your names. »

(P1, p.153; G1, Ch. 30.9)

MATTHIAS HAS CHANGED HIS NAME

(Jesus has started his mission and he goes to find the 12 shepherds, his first friends. He meets two of them, Elias and Levi, and Joseph (Junior) the son of the shepherd Joseph who was killed trying to save his family.)

(Jesus says:) « ... you give Me what I am seeking: love, faith and hope, a hope that will last for years and bear flowers. See? You waited for Me and you believed without the least doubt, that I was the Messiah. And I have come to you. [...] You will live until Christ's triumph and after. You saw My dawn, you must see My glory. And what about the others? You were twelve: Elias, Levi, Samuel, Jonah, Isaac, Tobias, Jonathan, Daniel, Simeon, John, Joseph, Benjamin. My Mother always mentioned your names to Me. Because you were My first friends. »

« Oh! » The shepherds are more and more moved.

« Where are the others? »

« [...] Simeon, John and **Tobias, who now wants to be called Matthias in memory of his father who was also killed,** are disciples of John. »

(P1, pp. 391-2; G1,Ch.75.2-4)

MATTHIAS GIVES JESUS

AN UPDATE ON JOHN THE BAPTIST

Joseph is on the road, waiting, and he looks up and down. Jesus appears in the distance with His three disciples at the junction of the river path with the main road. Joseph calls the shepherds Matthias, John and Simeon, who lead the sheep on to the road, driving them along the grassy bank. They walk fast towards Jesus.

« I haven't got the courage...What shall I say to greet Him? »

« Oh! He is so good! Say: "Peace be with You". He always says that. »

« Yes, He... but we... »

« And what about me? I am not even one of His first worshippers, and He is so fond of me... oh! so fond! » says Joseph, son of the shepherd Joseph.

« Which one is it? »

« The tallest One with fair hair. »

« Matthias, will we tell Him of the Baptist? »

« Of course we will! »

« Will He not think that we preferred the Baptist to Him? »

« No, Simeon. If He is the Messiah, He can see into the hearts of men, and in ours He will see that in the Baptist, we were still looking for Him. »

« Yes, you are right. »

The two groups are now a few yards apart. Jesus is already smiling His indescribable smile. Joseph hastens his step. Also the sheep begin to run urged by the herdsman.

« Peace be with you » says Jesus raising His arms as if He were embracing them. And He specifies: « Peace to you, Simeon, John and Matthias, faithful to Me, and faithful to John the Prophet! Peace to you, Joseph » and He kisses him on his cheeks. The other three are now on their knees. « Come, My friends, under these trees on the exposed river-bed and let us talk. »

They go down and Jesus sits on a large protruding root, the others on the ground. Jesus smiles and looks at them intently, one by one: « Let Me become familiar with your faces. Your souls are already known to Me, souls that seek and love what is good, contrary to all worldly yearnings. [...] Have you any news of the Baptist? »

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The men, so far gagged by embarrassment, take heart. They find words at last: « He is still in jail. Our hearts tremble for him [...]. We love him... You know that we love him and that he deserves our love. After You left Bethlehem, we were persecuted by men... but we were distressed and disheartened because we had lost You, rather than by their hatred, and we were like trees uprooted by the wind. Then, after years of suffering, [...] we felt that the Baptist was the man of God, foreseen by the Prophets to prepare the way to his Christ and we went to him. We said: "If the Baptist precedes Him, and if we go to the Baptist, we will find Him." Because, my Lord, it was You we were looking for. »

« I know, and you found Me. And now I am with you. »

(P1, pp.433-5: G2, Ch. 81.1-2)

MATTHIAS POSSESSES WISDOM

(The Baptist says to Jesus who has visited him before his death:) « I am about to die. As a father is anxious for his children, so I am anxious for my disciples. My disciples... You are a Master and You know how fondly we love them. My only fear in dying is that they may get lost like sheep without a shepherd. Will You please gather them. I give You back the three (Matthias, John & Simeon) who are Yours and who have been perfect disciples while waiting for You. They, and Matthias in particular, really possess wisdom. I have some more and they will come to You. Allow me to entrust those three to You personally. They are the dearest. »

« And they are dear to Me. Do not worry, John. They shall not perish. Neither those three, nor the other true disciples of yours. I will collect your inheritance and look after it as the dearest treasure received from the perfect friend and servant of the Lord. »

(P2, p.30; G2, Ch.148.2)

THE DEATH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

[Ed: Matthias gives a great amount of detail about the circumstances leading to the death of John the Baptist, and their presence till the very end, but due to space constraints, I have had to reduce the information.]

Jesus looks out of the window saying: « Peace be with you... Oh! It is you. Come in! »

They are the three shepherds John, Matthias and Simeon. « Oh! Master! » they say looking up and showing their sorrowful faces. Not even the sight of Jesus cheers them up.

[...] The three men kneel down kissing the floor. Then John says on behalf of them all: « Receive us now, Lord, because we are Your inheritance » and tears stream down the faces of the disciple and his companions.

Jesus and Manaen utter one only cry: « John!? »

« He has been killed... »

[...] Jesus becomes as pale as ivory while His eyes dilate glazing over. He opens His arms saying, and His voice is deep in the effort to make it steady: « Peace to the martyr of justice and to My Precursor. » He folds His arms, collects His thoughts in prayer, communicating with the Spirit of God and of the Baptist.

[...] Jesus opens His mouth and eyes again. His countenance, His eyes, His voice have resumed the divine majesty habitual to Him. Only a deep melancholy tempered with peace hovers about Him. « Come and tell Me. As from today you will be Mine. » And He takes them into the room, closing the door and half-drawing the

curtains, [...] to form a partition between such perfection of life and the corrupt world. « Speak » He tells them.

Matthias says: « It was the evening of the feast... The event was unforeseeable... Only two hours before, Herod had consulted with John and had dismissed him very kindly... shortly before the... murder, the martyrdom, the crime, the glorification, [...]. And shortly afterwards, we heard Simeon's cry: "Murderers!" and then we saw the headsman pass again with the head on the tray... John, Your Precursor, was dead... [...] Neither has his word changed, Master. His eyes, although disfigured, under a large wound, still say: "You are not allowed". But we have lost him! »

« And we are now Your disciples, because that is what he said, and he told us that You already know. »

« Yes, you have been Mine for months. How did you come? »

« On foot; by stages. It was a long painful journey, in the heat of sands and of the sun, made even more painful by grief. We have been walking for almost twenty days... »

« You will rest now. » **(P 2, pp. 730-2; G4, Ch. 270.3-7)**

GOING TOWARDS EMMAUS ON THE PLAIN.

They proceed towards Emmaus, which is already close at hand, a group of white dazzling houses among the golden hue of ripe corn and the green of fertile orchards.

« Master! Master! Stop! Here are Your disciples! » shout voices from afar. And a handful of men, departing from some peasants resting in the shade of an apple-orchard, run towards Jesus along a sunny path. They are Matthias and John, formerly shepherds and later disciples of the Baptist.

« Peace to you. You are here? »

« Yes, Master. We have been along all the shores of the sea. We are now going towards Jerusalem. Farther north there is Stephen with other disciples. And farther up there is Hermas with others. And Isaac, our little master, is even farther north. [...] But by now they are all about to come to the feast of Pentecost. We thus formed many groups, small ones, but active. And if they should persecute us, they may capture some, but not all of us » explains Matthias.

« You have done the right thing. I was surprised at not finding you anywhere in southern Judaea... »

« Master... You were going there... Who could do better than You? In any case... Oh! Judaea has had more than is needed to become holy!... And yet!... They throw stones at those who take the word of Heaven to them. Elias and Joseph were beaten in the gorges of the Kidron and they went beyond the Jordan to Solomon's house. Joseph was almost killed by a stone that struck his head. They lived for eight days in a deep grotto, with the man You sent and who knew all the secrets of the mountains. Then at night, they slowly passed to the other side... »

The disciples and apostles are excited in recalling and hearing of such persecutions. But Jesus calms them saying: « [...] Blessed among the blessed are those who suffer persecutions for My sake. »

(P3, pp. 748-50; G6, Ch. 404.5)

LITTLE MICHAEL AND MATTHIAS NEAR EMMAUS ON THE PLAIN.

Jesus also is tired. More than tired, He is sad. He looks at the sleeping apostles for some time. He is praying and

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thinking... [...] Then He lies on the hay too, and His sweet sad sapphire eyes are soon covered by His eyelids. And His face becomes motionless in sleep, and perhaps because He has fallen asleep with a heavy heart, His countenance is very much as tired and grievous as it will be at His death...

The peasants who own the house have come back: men, women and children. And the disciples seen previously are with them. They see Jesus and His apostles sleeping on the hay and their voices fade into whispers not to awake them.

A little fellow, with the steps of a little dove and a finger in his mouth, approaches Jesus and watches Him - « He is the nicest » he says - while He sleeps with His head resting on His folded arm as on a pillow. And all the rest, barefooted, on the tips of their toes, end up imitating him, Matthias and John being the first, and they are deeply moved seeing Him sleep on the hay. Matthias remarks: « As in His first sleep... He is now... our Master, but less happy than then... He misses His Mother also... »

« Even more, Matthias. Much more. Then we loved Him only out of faith and because it is pleasant to love a baby. But now we love Him also because we know Him... »

« He has been hated since He was a baby, John. Remember what they did in order to strike Him!... » and Matthias goes pale remembering.

« That is true... But blessed be that sorrow! We lost everything but Him. And that is what matters. What use would it have been to us if we still had relatives, our homes and our little properties if He were dead? »

« That's true. You are right, Matthias. And of what avail will it be to us to have the whole world when He will no longer be in the world? »

[...] « We will tell Him... But He will be happy also because of your love. Go now... »

[...] Then silence envelops the house once again. [...] The little fellow seen a short time ago, who is now beautiful in his very short shirt, the only garment he has on in this torrid hour, puts his little dark head out of the kitchen door, watches closely, and comes forward cautiously with his tender little feet aching on the hot ground. His loose little shirt almost slips off his plump shoulders. He reaches the disciples and tries to step over them to go and look at Jesus once again. But his little legs are too short to get over the sturdy bodies of adults, and he stumbles falling on Matthias who awakens and sees the little face of the mortified child, ready to cry. He smiles, and understanding the reason for the little fellow's manoeuvre, he says: « Come here, I will put you between Jesus and myself. But you must be silent and still. Let Him sleep because He is tired. »

And the child sits down happily, adoring Jesus' beautiful face. He looks at Him, studies Him, and is dying to caress Him and touch His golden hair. But Matthias is vigilant smiling and does not allow him. The child then asks in a low voice: « Does He always sleep like that? »

« Always like that » replies Matthias.

« Is He tired? Why? »

« Because He walks and talks so much. »

« Why does He talk and walk? »

« To teach children to be good and to love the Lord to go to Heaven with Him. »

« Up there? How does one do that? It's far... »

« Your soul, do you know what a soul is? »

« No! »

« It is the nicest thing we have, and... »

« More than our eyes? My mummy says that my eyes are two stars. Stars are beautiful, you know?! »

The disciple smiles and replies: « It is more beautiful than the little stars of your eyes, because a good soul is more beautiful than the sun. »

« Oh! Where is it? Where have I got it? »

« Here. In your little heart. And it hears and sees everything and it never dies. And when one is never bad and dies as a just person, one's soul flies up there, with the Lord. »

« With Him? » and the child points at Jesus.

« With Him. »

« But has He got a soul? »

« He has soul and divinity. Because that Man you are looking at is God. »

« How do you know? Who told you? »

« The angels did. »

The boy, who was sitting leaning on Matthias, cannot take in the news quietly, and he jumps to his feet asking: « Have you seen the angels? » and he looks at Matthias opening his big eyes wide. The news is so astonishing that he forgets Jesus for a moment and thus he does not see that He has half-opened His eyes, awakened by the boy's exclamation. Jesus closes His eyes once again smiling and turns His head round to the other side.

« Be quiet! See? You are waking Him up... I will send you away. »

« I'll be good. But what are the angels like? When did you see them? » His voice is a whisper again.

And Matthias patiently tells the boy, who has sat again in an ecstasy on his chest, what happened on Christmas Night. And he patiently replies to all the boy's questions: « Why was He born in a stable? Had He no home? Was He so poor that He could not find a house? Has He got a house now? Has He no Mother? Where is His Mother? Why does She leave Him all alone since She knows that they wanted to kill Him? Does She not love Him?... » A hail of questions and one of answers. And the last one - to which Matthias replies: « His holy Mother loves Her Divine Son very much, but She makes a sacrifice of Her sorrow for letting Him go about, so that men may be saved. And to console Herself, She considers that there are still good men capable of loving Him »

This brings about this reply: « Does She not know that there are good children who love Him? Where is She? Tell me because I will go and say to Her: "Do not weep. I will give all my love to Your Son". What do you think? Will She be pleased? »

« So much, my child » says Matthias kissing him.

« And will He be glad? »

« Yes, very much. You will tell Him when He awakes. »

« Oh! yes!... But when will He awake? » The boy is anxious...

Jesus can resist no longer. He turns round, with His eyes wide open and a bright smile, and He says: « You have already told Me because I have heard everything. Come here, child. »

Oh! the boy does not need to be told twice and he throws himself on Jesus, caressing and kissing Him, touching His forehead, His golden eyebrows and eyelids with his little finger, looking at himself in His blue eyes, rubbing himself against His soft beard and silky hair, repeating at each

discovery: « How lovely You are! Lovely! Lovely! » Jesus and Matthias smile. (P3, pp.751-4; G6, Ch. 405.1-4)

THE WISDOM AND PRUDENCE OF MATTHIAS

(Jesus goes to the grotto with his disciples during His mission. They all enter the one where He was born but then the disciples go out again and reluctantly enter the other grotto beyond this one.)

[..] a reddish quivering light appears among the ruins. And then, one after the other, the shepherd disciples come: Matthias, John, Levi, Joseph, Daniel, Benjamin, Elias, Simeon. Matthias is holding a lighted branch to see the way. But the one who runs ahead is Levi and he is the first to look into Jesus' grotto. And he soon turns round and beckons to the others to stop and be silent and he looks again... and then, with his right arm stretched backwards, he beckons to the others to come and he moves aside to make room for them, holding his finger on his lip to tell them to be silent, as one after the other they look in and then withdraw as deeply moved as Levi.

« What shall we do? » asks Elias in a whisper.

« Let us stay here and contemplate Him » says Joseph.

« No, it is not right to violate the spiritual secrets of souls. Let us withdraw over there » says Matthias.

« You are right. Let us go into the next stable. We shall still be here and close to Him » says Levi.

« Let us go » they say. But before going away they look hastily once again into the grotto of the Nativity and then withdraw, deeply affected, trying not to make any noise.

[...] Simeon complains about it saying: « Why not stay at the entrance of His grotto, and see Him now and again? For years we have got wet with heavy dew under an open sky to watch over our lambs! And can we not do the same for the Lamb of God? We are entitled to do it because we worshipped Him in His first sleep! »

« You are right as a man and as a worshipper of the Man-God. But what did you see when you looked in there? A man, perhaps? No. Without knowing it, we have crossed the impassable threshold after removing the treble veil laid to protect the mystery, and we have seen what not even the High Priest sees when he enters the Holy of Holies. We have seen the ineffable love of God for God. It is not right to spy on it again. The power of God might punish our bold eyes that have seen the ecstasy of the Son of God. Oh! let us be happy with what we have had! We had come here to spend the night in prayer before going away on our mission. We came to pray and to remember the night of long ago... We have instead contemplated the love of God! Oh! The Eternal Father has really loved us very much by giving us the joy of contemplating the Child and suffering for Him, and the joy of announcing Him to the world as disciples of the Child God and of the Man-God! He has now granted us this mystery as well... Let us bless the Most High and do not let us wish for anything else! » says Matthias, who I think is the most authoritative in wisdom and justice among the shepherds.

« You are right. God has loved us very much. We must not pretend more. Samuel, Joseph and Matthias had but the joy of worshipping the Child and suffering for Him. Jonas died without being able to follow Him. Isaac is not here either to see what we have seen. And if there is one who deserves it, it is Isaac, who is wearing himself out to announce Him » says John.

« That is true! Very true! How happy Isaac would have been to see all this! But we shall tell him » says Daniel.

« Yes. Let us remember everything in our hearts to tell him » says Elias.

« And the other disciples and believers! » exclaims Benjamin.

« No. Not the others. Not out of selfishness, but out of prudence and respect for the mystery. If God wants, the hour will come when we are able to speak. For the time being, we must be quiet » says Matthias again, and addressing Simeon he goes on: « You and I were disciples of John. Remember how he taught us prudence concerning holy things: "If God, who has already blessed you, will grant you extraordinary gifts one day, do not let that make intoxicated chatterboxes of you. Remember that God reveals Himself to the spirits which are enclosed in the flesh because they are celestial gems not to be exposed to the filth of the world. Be holy in your bodies and in your senses in order to be able to control every carnal instinct, in your eyes and your ears, in your tongues and in your hands. And be holy in your thoughts checking the pride of letting other people know what you have. Because your senses, organs and intellects must serve and not reign. They must serve the spirit, not rule over the spirit. They must protect, not upset the spirit. So put the seal of your prudence on the mysteries of God in you, unless He gives you an explicit order otherwise, as the spirit has the seal of temporary imprisonment in the body. Our bodies and intellects would be completely useless, harmful and dangerous, if they did not serve to give us merit through the afflictions we compel them to suffer in reply to the wicked incentives by which they urge us, and if they did not serve as temple for the altar over which hovers the glory of God: our spirits". Do you remember, John, and you, Simeon? I hope you do, because if you do not remember the words of our first master, he would be really dead as far as you are concerned. A master lives as long as his doctrine lives in his disciples. And even if he is replaced by a greater master - and in the case of Jesus' disciples, by the Master of masters - it is never right to forget the words of the previous one, who prepared us to understand and love the Lamb of God with wisdom. »

« That is true. You speak wisely, Matthias, and we will obey you. »

« But how painful and fatiguing it is to resist looking at Him again when we are so close to Him! Will He still be as He was? » asks Simeon.

« Who knows?! How His face shone! »

« More than the moon in a clear night! »

« His lips had a divine smile... »

« And His eyes shed divine tears... »

« He did not utter one word. But everything was prayer in Him. »

« What will He have seen? »

« His Eternal Father. Do you doubt it? Only that sight can give such an aspect. Nay, what am I saying? Rather than see Him, He was with Him, in Him! The Word with the Thought! And they loved each other!... Ah!... » says Levi, who seems to be in an ecstasy as well.

« That is exactly why I said that it was not right for us to stay there. Consider that He did not even want His apostle with Him... »

« Of course. That's true! Holy Master! He needs to be overflowing with the love of God, more than dry land needs water! There is so much hatred around Him!... »
« But also so much love. I would like... Yes, I will do it! The Most High is present here. I offer myself and I say: "Most High God, God and Father of Your people, Who accept and consecrate hearts and altars and sacrifice the victims pleasing to You, let Your will descend like fire and consume me as a victim with Christ, like Christ, and for Christ, Your Son and Your Messiah, my God and Master. I implore You. Hear my prayer". » And Matthias, who had prayed standing up with raised arms, sits down again on the bundle of sticks, where they were sitting.

(P4, pp. 810-2; G8, Ch.538.6-9)

JESUS APPEARS TO THE SHEPHERDS AFTER HIS RESURRECTION.

The [shepherds] walk fast under the olive-trees, and they are so certain of His Resurrection that they converse with the joy of happy children. They go straight towards the town.

« We will tell Peter to look at Him carefully and to tell us how beautiful is His face » says Elias.

« Oh! no matter how beautiful it may be, I shall never be able to forget what He was like when He was tortured » whispers Isaac.

« But do you remember Him when He was lifted up on the Cross? » asks Levi. « And do you all remember Him? »

« I do, and perfectly. The light was still good then. Later, with my old eyes, I could not see much » says Daniel.

« I instead, saw Him until He seemed to be dead. But I would have preferred to be blind, in order not to see » says Joseph.

« Oh! well. Now He has risen. That must make us happy » says John to comfort him.

« And the thought that we only left Him for an act of charity » adds Jonathan.

« But our hearts remained up there. All the time » whispers Matthias.

« Yes. All the time. Since you have seen the [veil of] veronica, tell us: what is it like? Does it look like Him? » asks Benjamin.

« As if He were speaking » replies Isaac.

« Will we see that veil? », many ask.

« Oh! the Mother shows it to everybody. You will certainly see it. But it is a sad sight. It would be better to see... Oh! Lord! » [he says, suddenly noticing the risen Christ]

« Faithful servants. Here I am. Go. I will wait for you in Galilee in a few days' time. I want to tell you once more that I love you. Jonah is blissful with the others in Heaven. »

« Lord! Oh! Lord. »

« Peace to you of good will. »

The Risen Lord vanishes in the bright midday sunbeam. When they raise their heads, He is no longer there. But there is the joy of having seen Him as He is now: glorious. They stand up transfixed with joy. In their humbleness, they cannot be persuaded that they deserved to see Him and they say: « To us! To us! How good is our Lord! From His birth to His triumph, always humble and good to His poor servants! »

« And how handsome He was! »

« Oh! He was never so handsome! What majesty! »

« He looks even taller and of riper age. »

« He is really the King! »

« Oh! They called Him the peaceful King! But He is also the terrible King for those who must be afraid of His judgement! »

« Did you see what beams were emitted by His Face? »

« And how His eyes flashed! »

« I did not dare stare at Him. And I would have liked to stare at Him, because I think that perhaps I shall be granted to see Him so only in Heaven. And I want to know Him, so that I shall not be afraid of Him then. »

(Matthias says:) « Oh! we must not be afraid if we remain as we are: His faithful servants. You have heard Him: "I want to tell you once more that I love you. Peace to you of good will". Oh! not a word too many. But in that little there is His full approval of what we have done so far and His greatest promises for our future lives. Oh! let us intone the song of joy. Of our joy: "Glory to God in the most high Heavens and peace on earth to men of good will. The Lord has really risen, as He had said through the mouths of the prophets and with His own faultless word. With His Blood He has wiped off the corruption that the kiss of a man had laid on Him, and, as the altar is cleansed, His Body has assumed the inexpressible beauty of God. Before ascending to Heaven, He has shown Himself to His servants. Alleluia. Let us go on singing, alleluia! The eternal youth of God! Let us go announcing to the people that He has risen, alleluia! The Just, the Holy Lord has risen, alleluia, alleluia! From the Sepulchre He has risen immortal. And just men have risen with Him. In sin, as in a grotto, the hearts of men were closed. He died to say: 'Rise!' And those who were dispersed have risen, alleluia! Having opened the gates of Heaven, He said to the chosen ones: 'Come'. For the sake of His holy Blood may He grant us to ascend as well. Alleluia!" »

Matthias, the elderly ex-disciple of John the Baptist, goes ahead singing, as perhaps in days gone by David had sung before His people along the streets in Judaea. The others follow him, replying in chorus to each alleluia with holy joy.

(P5, pp.725-7; G10, Ch. 624.1-3)

THE ELECTION OF MATTHIAS

It is a placid evening. [...] The court-yard of the house of the Supper room, a large yard among the white walls of the house, is crowded with people as in the evenings after Resurrection. And a harmonious whispering of prayers, interrupted now and again by pauses of meditation, rises from these people engrossed in thought.

As the light becomes fainter and fainter in the court-yard, surrounded as it is by the high walls of the house, some people bring lamps and place them on the table, close to which the apostles are gathered: Peter in the centre, James of Alphaeus and John beside him, and then the others. [...] showing their expressions: concentrated on the expression of Peter, as if he were over strung in the effort to perform these first functions of his ministry in a worthy way. They end with the long and beautiful Psalm 118, of which they say a strophe (stanza) each, in two turns to complete the number of the strophes. Then they all become absorbed in silence until Peter, who had sat down, stands up as if he were urged by an inspiration, praying in a loud voice with his arms stretched out as the Lord used to do: « Send Your Spirit to us, o Lord, so that we may see in His Light. »

« Maran atha » they all say.

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Peter collects his thoughts in an intense silent prayer, but perhaps he listens more than he prays, or at least he waits for words of light... Then he raises his head again and once again he stretches out his arms, which he had folded across his chest, and as he is small as compared to the majority of his companions, he climbs on his seat to dominate the little crowd thronging the court-yard, and to be seen by everybody. And everybody, realising that he is going to speak, becomes silent and looks at him paying attention.

« My brothers, it was necessary that the Scripture predicted by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of David and concerning Judas should be accomplished, Judas in fact was the guide who led those who captured the Lord and our Blessed Master: Jesus.

He, Judas, was one of ours, and was entrusted with this ministry. But his election changed into ruin for him, [...] So it is necessary that one of these men, who have been with us all the time that the Lord Jesus was with us, coming and going, beginning from the Baptism by John until the day in which from the middle of us He ascended to Heaven, is appointed to be witness with us of His Resurrection. And it is necessary to do so quickly, so that he may be present with us at the Baptism of Fire, of which the Lord has spoken to us, so that he, who did not receive the Holy Spirit from the Master, may receive it directly from God and be enlightened and sanctified by it, and he may have the virtues that we shall receive, and he may judge and remit and do what we shall do, and his actions may be valid and holy.

I would suggest to choose him among the most faithful of the faithful disciples, those who have suffered for Him remaining faithful also when He was the One Unknown to the world. Many of them come to us from John, the Precursor of the Messiah, spirits modelled throughout years for the service of God. The Lord was very fond of them, and the most fond among them was Isaac, who had suffered so much because of the child Jesus. But you know that his heart broke during the night that followed the Ascension of the Lord. Let us not mourn him. He has joined his Lord. It was the only desire of his heart... And also ours... But we have to suffer our passion. [...] So you are to suggest some names among these, so that the twelfth apostle may be elected according to the usages of our people, leaving the power of indicating, in the gravest circumstances, to the Lord, to Him Who knows. »

They consult with one another. After a short time the most important disciples (among the non-shepherds), by mutual consent with the ten apostles, inform Peter that they propose Joseph, the son of Joseph of Saba, to honour his father, a martyr for Christ, by means of his son, a faithful disciple, and Matthias, for the same reasons as for Joseph, and, further, to honour also his first master: John. And as Peter agrees to their advice, they make the two come forward to the table and in the meantime they pray with their arms stretched forward in the usual attitude of the Hebrews: « Most High Lord, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the Only and Trine God, Who know the hearts of all men, show us which of these two You have chosen to take in this ministry and apostolate the place of Judas who prevaricated, and go in his stead. »

« Maran atha » they all reply in chorus.

As they have no dice or anything else with which to cast lots, and as they do not wish to use coins for this purpose,

they take some small stones spread about the yard, some poor little stones, as many white as dark, and they decide that the white ones are for Matthias, the others for Joseph. They put them in a bag, after emptying it of its contents, they shake it and they offer it to Peter who, after making a blessing gesture on it, puts his hand in it, praying with his eyes at the sky, strewn with stars, and pulls out a little stone: as white as snow. The Lord has indicated Matthias as Judas' successor.

Peter goes to the front of the table and embraces him « to make him like himself » he says. Also the other ten make the same gesture amid the applause of the little crowd.

At the end Peter, after going back to his place holding by the hand the chosen apostle who is beside him - so Peter is now between Matthias and James of Alphaeus - says: « Come to the place that God has reserved for you and with your justice cancel the memory of Judas, helping us, your brothers, to accomplish the deeds that Jesus told us to do. May the grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ be always with you. »

He addresses all the others, dismissing them...

While the disciples disperse slowly through a secondary exit, the apostles go back into the house taking Matthias to Mary, Who is engrossed in prayer in Her room, so that the new apostle may receive the word of greeting and election also from the Mother of God.

(P5, pp. 878-82; G10, Ch. 639.1-6)

THE REMAINS OF SAINT MATTHIAS

Feast day 14 May

Matthias was the apostle chosen to replace the traitor Judas Iscariot. He was sentenced to stoning but this method miraculously failed so he was then beheaded.

According to tradition, Saint Matthias preached in Capadocia, Turkey, and was martyred in Colchis, Armenia on the eastern coast of the Black Sea.

Empress Helena, mother of Roman emperor Constantine I, is said to have brought Saint Matthias' relics from Jerusalem and divided them between the basilica of St. Mary Major in Rome and an abbey church in Germany. However, the relics were only discovered in 1127 during demolition work on the previous church buildings in Germany, in which they had been well hidden to protect them from plundering.

The abbey church of the Benedictine monastery had been renamed St. Matthias' Abbey, in Trier, Rhineland-Palatinate, Germany. It is a Romanesque basilica, and a renowned pilgrimage place for two reasons: it houses the relics of Saint Matthias; and it is the only burial place of an apostle in Germany and north of the Alps.

The Benedictine monks enshrined the relics in a beautifully carved tomb in front of the altar which consists of a barefoot marble effigy of the Apostle Matthias placed at the nave and surrounded many tall candles. The relics are beneath the tomb in a small plain sarcophagus which is accessible from the crypt.

