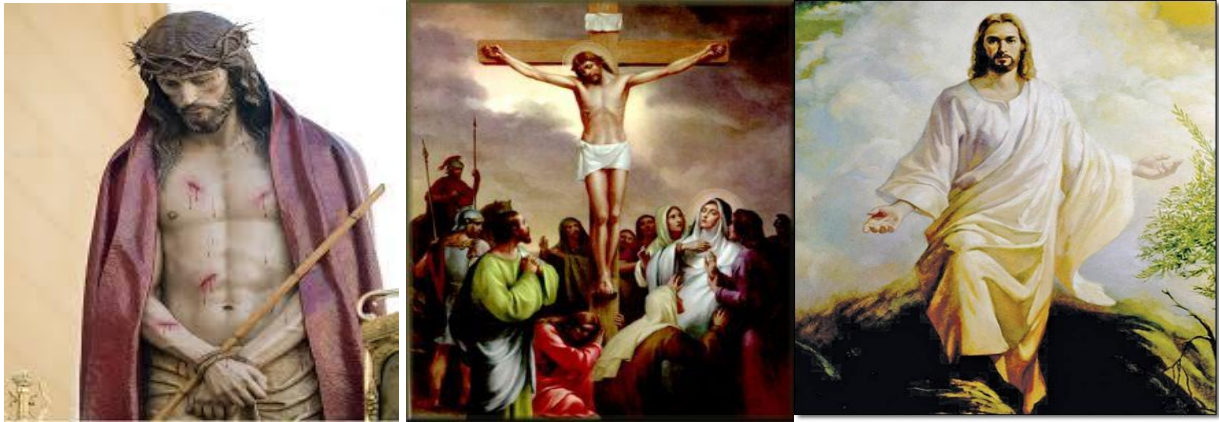


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MARIA VALTORTA READERS' GROUP

THE SUPPLEMENT No. 81 – MARCH 2016



With the approaching Passion, Death and Resurrection of Jesus in this quarter, this Supplement is Part Two of Jesus & His Shepherds. It begins with the Shepherds during the Passion and culminates at the Ascension.

During Jesus' Trial – with Herod

[...Herod says:]« Enough. I treated You as God, and You did not act as God. I treated You as a man, and you have not acted as a man. You are mad. A white garment. Clothe Him with it so that Pontius Pilate may know that the Tetrarch took his subject to be mad. Centurion, please tell the Proconsul that Herod humbly presents his respect to him and venerates Rome. Go. »

And Jesus, tied once again, goes out with a linen tunic reaching down to His knees, on top of His red woolen garment. And they go back to Pilate.

Now when the century, with difficulty, squeeze through the crowd, which did not get tired waiting in front of the proconsular building (and it is strange to see so many people in that place and its neighbourhood while the rest of the town seems to be empty), Jesus sees the shepherds in a group and they are all there, that is, Isaac, Jonathan, Levi, Joseph, Elias, Matthias, John, Simeon, Benjamin and Daniel, together with a small group of Galileans, among whom I recognise Alphaeus and Joseph of Alphaeus with two more whom I do not know...

(The Poem Vol. 5 p. 562, The Gospel Vol. 10 p. 64)

Carrying the Cross - Jesus sees the Shepherds

Longinus, who turns round now and again, feels sorry for Him and orders a few minutes' stop. And the rabble insults him so much that the centurion orders the soldiers to charge them. And the fainthearted crowds at the sight of the shining threatening lances, run away shouting and hurling themselves here and there down the mountain.

It is here that, among the few people who have remained, I again see the small group of the shepherds appear from behind some ruins, probably of a collapsed low wall. They are desolate, upset, dusty, in rags, and with the power of their glances, they attract the Master's attention. He turns His head round, He sees them... He looks at them fixedly as if they were the faces of angels, He seems to quench His thirst and fortify Himself with their tears, and He smiles... The order to resume the march is given and

Jesus passes just in front of them and He hears their anguished weeping. With difficulty, He turns His head round from under the yoke of the cross and He smiles once again... His solace... Ten faces... a rest in the burning sun... And immediately afterwards, the pain of the third fall, a complete one. And this time He does not stumble. He falls because of a sudden lack of strength, due to a syncope. He falls headlong, knocking His face on the uneven stones, and He remains in the dust under the cross that falls on Him...

(The Poem Vol. 5 p. 597, The Gospel Vol. 10 p. 108)

The Way of the Cross- The Shepherds' Courage

Behind these women and the Maries, I can see Joseph and Simon of Alphaeus, and Alphaeus of Sarah with the group of the shepherds. They have scuffled with those who wanted to repel them insulting them, and the strength of these men, increased by their love and grief, has been so powerful that they defeated their opponents, forming a free semicircle at which the very pusillanimous Jews dare only to hurl cries of death and shake their fists. But nothing else, because the crooks of the shepherds are knotty and heavy, and these valiant men lack neither strength nor the ability to aim accurately. And I am not wrong in saying so. It takes real courage for a few men, known as Galileans or followers of the Galilean Master, to oppose a hostile population. It is the only place on the whole of Calvary in which Christ is not cursed!

(The Poem Vol. 5 p. 604, The Gospel Vol. 10 p. 118)

The Shepherd Isaac

There is another knock at the door. The women hasten to go out and close the door. In Her tired voice Mary says: « If it is the disciples, and in particular Simon Peter and Judas, let them come to Me at once. »

But it is Isaac, the shepherd. He goes in weeping after some minutes and he prostrates himself at once before the [veil of] veronica and then before the Mother, and he

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does not know what to say. It is Mary Who says: « Thank you. He saw you and I saw you. I know. He looked at you as long as He could. »

Isaac weeps louder. He can speak only when he has finished weeping. « We did not want to go away. But Jonathan begged us. The Jews were threatening the women... and later we were no longer able to come. It was... it was all over... Where should we have gone then? We scattered through the countryside and at dead of night we gathered together half way between Jerusalem and Bethlehem. We thought we would turn His Death away by going towards His Grotto... But then we felt that it was not right to go there... It was selfishness, and we came back towards the City... And we found ourselves, without knowing how, at Bethany... »

(The Poem Vol. 5 p. 675, The Gospel Vol. 10. p. 207)

Jesus Appears to the Shepherds

They also 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! »

« 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, transfigured 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. »

« 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 shepherd and] 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.

Jonathan, who is a member of the group, while Jerusalem is already at the feet of the hillock, which they are descending rapidly, says: « Through His birth I have lost fatherland and home, and through His death I have lost the new house where for thirty years I worked honestly. But even if they had taken my life because of Him, I would have died happily, because I would have lost it for Him. I bear him, who is unfair to me, no grudge. Through His death my Lord has taught me perfect meekness. And I am not worried about the future. My abode is not here, but in Heaven. I shall live in the poverty so dear to Him and I will serve Him until He calls me... This is the most aching pain... But now that I have seen the suffering of the Christ and His glory, I must not weigh my grief, but only hope in the celestial glory. Let us go and tell the apostles that Jonathan is the servant of the servants of the Christ. »

(The Poem Vol. 5 pp. 725-7), The Gospel Vol. 10 pp. 269-72)

Before Jesus Appears in the Supper Room

The house of the Supper room is full of people. The hall, the courtyard, the rooms, apart from the Supper room and the Virgin Mary's room, show the joyful excited appearance of a place where many people meet, after

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some time, for a feast. The apostles are there, except Thomas. The shepherds are there. The faithful women are there, and with Johanna, there are Nike, Eliza, Syra, Marcella, Anne. They are all speaking in low voices, but with evident joyful excitement. The house is locked, as if they were afraid, but the fear from outside does not affect the joy inside...

Mary smiles blissfully and says: « I ask the Lord to cleanse My lips as He did with the prophet, so that I may be able to speak worthily of My Lord. May you be blessed, the first fruits of Rome. »...

« May God lead you to His Light, sons! Come! To meet the servants of the Lord. This is John. And you know him. And this is Simon Peter, chosen by My Son and Lord to be the head of the brothers. This is James and this is Judas, cousins of the Lord. This is Simon and this is Andrew, who is Peter's brother. And this is James, John's brother. And these are Philip, Bartholomew and Matthew. Thomas is absent, still far away, but I mention his name as if he were present. They are the ones who have been chosen for a special mission. But these ones, who are standing humbly in the shade, are the first in the heroism of love. For over thirty years they have been preaching the Christ. Neither persecutions against them, nor the conviction of the Innocent have impaired their faith. Fishermen and shepherds, and you patricians. But in Jesus' name distinctions do not exist any more. Love in the Christ makes us all equal and brothers. And My love calls you sons, including you of another nation. Even more, I say that I find you once again after losing you, because, at the moment of sorrow, you were near My Dying Son. And I will not forget your compassion, Longinus, or your words, soldier. I looked as if I had been killed. But I saw everything. I do not have the possibility of rewarding you. And, really, for holy things there is no money, but only love and prayer. And that is what I will give you, praying our Lord Jesus Himself to reward you. »
(The Poem Vol. 5 pp. 735-6, The Gospel Vol. 10 pp. 281-3)

The Shepherd Elias with the Apostle Thomas

There is a knock at the main door. They all become silent and listen. And they utter an « oh! » of surprise when they see Elias come into the hall with Thomas. Such a strange Thomas that he seems another person. His companions crowd round him shouting their joy: « Do you know that He has risen and has come? And He is waiting for you so that He may come back! »

« Yes. Also Elias [the shepherd] told me. But I do not believe it. I believe what I see. And I see that it is the end for us. I see that we are all scattered. I see that there is not even a known sepulchre where we may mourn over His death. I see that the Sanhedrin wants to get rid of both their accomplice, whose burial they have decreed at the foot of the olive-tree where he hanged himself, as if he were a filthy animal, and of the followers of the Nazarene. On Friday, I was stopped at the gates and they said to me: "Were you one of His followers as well? He is dead, now. Go back to beating gold". And I ran away... »

« Where? We have looked for you everywhere. »

« Where? I went towards the house of my sister at Ramah. But I did not dare to go in because... I did not want to be reproached by a woman. So I wandered about

the Judaeon mountains and yesterday I ended up at Bethlehem, in His grotto. How much I wept... I fell asleep among the ruins and Elias, who had come there... I do not know why, found me. »

« Why? Because in the hours of too great a joy or too great a sorrow, one goes where God is more felt. Many a time, in these past years, I have gone there by night, like a thief, to feel my soul being caressed by the remembrance of His cries. And then I would run away at sunrise, in order not to be stoned. But I was already comforted. Now I went there to say to that place: "I am happy" and to take what I can from it. That is what we have decided. We want to preach His Faith. And the strength to do so will be given to us by a bit of that wall, by a handful of that soil, by a splinter of those poles. We are not holy, as to dare to take the earth of Calvary... »

« You are right, Elias. We shall have to do that as well. And we will. But Thomas?... »

« Thomas slept and wept. I said to him: "Wake up and stop weeping. He has risen". He would not believe me. But I insisted so much that I convinced him. Here he is. He is now with you and I will go away. I will join my companions who are going to Galilee. Peace to you. »
Elias goes away.

(The Poem Vol. 5 pp. 749-50, The Gospel Vol.10 pp. 299-300)

Last Teaching before the Ascension and the Shepherd Isaac

The hour has come. I am going back to My Father, but I am not leaving you all alone, because I leave you the Eucharist, that is, your Jesus made food for men. And I leave you the Friend: the Paraclete. He will guide you. I pass your souls from My light to His Light, and He will accomplish your formation. »

« Are You leaving us now? Upon this mountain? » They are all desolate.

« No. Not yet. But time flies and it will soon be that moment. »

« Oh! Do not leave me on the Earth without You, Lord. I have loved You from Your birth to Your Death, from Your Death to Your Resurrection, and always. But it would be too sad to know that You are no longer among us! You heard the prayer of Elisha's father. You have satisfied so many. Hear mine, Lord! » implores Isaac on his knees with his hands stretched out.

« The life you could still have would be a sermon on Me, perhaps the glory of martyrdom. You have been a martyr out of love for Me, a baby, are you now afraid of being one for Me glorious? »

« It would be my glory to follow You, Lord. I am poor and foolish. What I could give, I gave with a good will. Now this is what I would like: to follow You. But let it be done as You wish, now and always. »

Jesus lays His hand on Isaac's head, and leaves it there on a long caress, while He addresses them all saying:

« Have you no questions to ask Me? These are the last lessons. Speak to your Master... See how the little ones are on familiar terms with Me? » In fact also today Marjiam leans his head on Jesus' body, pressing himself against Him, and Isaac did not show any shyness in expressing his wish.

(The Poem Vol. 5 pp. 851-2, The Gospel Vol.10 pp. 423-4)

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Before the Ascension

My Mother is not weeping. She is aware that, if Her nostalgia for Me is the file that will consume Her heart, the wait will be always short as compared to the great joy of an eternal union, and She also knows that this parting of ours will not be so absolute as to make Her say: "I no longer have My Son". That was Her cry of sorrow on that day of sorrow. Now hope sings in Her heart: "I know that My Son is ascending to His Father, but He will not leave Me without His spiritual love". That is what you believe, and everybody... Here are the other men and women. Here are My shepherds. »

The faces of Lazarus and of his sisters among all the servants of Bethany, the face of Johanna like a rose under a veil of rain, and those of Eliza and of Nike, already marked by age - and wrinkles are now deepened by pain, always pain for creatures, even if the soul rejoices because of the triumph of the Lord - the face of Anastasica, the lily-like faces of the first virgins, and the ascetic face of Isaac, the inspired one of Matthias, and the virile face of Manaen, and the severe ones of Joseph and Nicodemus... Faces, faces, faces...

Jesus calls to Himself the shepherds, Lazarus, Joseph, Nicodemus, Manaen, Maximinus and the others of the seventy-two disciples. But He particularly keeps the shepherds close to Himself saying: « Here. You were near the Lord Who had come from Heaven, bent over His annihilation, You are to be near the Lord Who is going back to Heaven, with your souls rejoicing because of His glorification. You have deserved this place, because you did believe notwithstanding that all the circumstances were unfavourable, and you were able to suffer for your faith. I thank you for your faithful love. I thank all of you.

(The Poem Vol.5 pp.875-6, The Gospel Vol.10 pp.454-5)

The Death of the Shepherd Isaac & The Shepherd Matthias (formerly Tobias) becomes the Twelfth Apostle

The Lord was very fond of them, and the most fond among them was [the shepherd] 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. Isaac had already suffered it. 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 [the shepherd] 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 [the Baptist].

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.

(The Poem Vol.5 p.881, The Gospel Vol. 10 p. 468)

A Final Word on the Shepherds

[Jesus says:]

« I have shown Myself many times and to many people, also in extraordinary manifestations. But My manifestation did not produce the same effect in everybody. We can see how to each manifestation of Mine corresponds a sanctification of those who possessed the good will required of men to have Peace, Life, Justice. So, Grace worked in the shepherds for the thirty years of My concealed life, then it flowered yielding a holy ear of corn when it was the time in which the good parted from the wicked to follow the Son of God, Who was passing along the ways of the world, uttering His cry of love to assemble the sheep of the eternal Flock, scattered and dispersed by Satan. Present among the crowds that followed Me, they were My messengers, because with their simple and convincing reports, they proclaimed the Christ saying: "It is He. We recognise Him. The lullabies of the angels descended upon His first wailing. And we were told by the angels that men of good will will have peace. Good will is the desire of Good and Truth. Let us follow Him! Follow Him! We shall all have the Peace promised by the Lord".

Humble, ignorant, poor, My first messengers among men, rushed like sentries along the road of the King of Israel, of the King of the world. Faithful eyes, honest mouths, loving hearts, thuribles exhaling the perfume of their virtues to make less corrupt the air of the Earth around My Divine Person, that had become incarnate for them and for all men, and I found them even at the foot of the Cross, after blessing them with My eyes along the sanguinary road of Golgotha, the only ones, with very few more, who did not curse Me among the unrestrained crowd, but who loved, believed, still hoped, and looked at Me with compassionate eyes, thinking of the remote night of My Birth and weeping on the Innocent, Who slept His first sleep on an uncomfortable piece of wood, and His last one on an even more painful one. That because My manifestation to them, who were righteous souls, had sanctified them.

(The Poem Vol. 5 pp. 909-10, The Gospel Vol. 10 pp. 498-8)

**This ends the story of Jesus & His 12 Shepherds.
What a true blessing Jesus gave us
through His servant, Maria Valtorta.
Our minds and our hearts are now fully satisfied.**