

## MARIA VALTORTA READERS GROUP

Postal address: 162 Burke Road, Glen Iris, Victoria, 3146 Australia  
Phone: (03) 9885 9710 E-mail: catherine @valtorta.org.au Website: http://www.valtorta.org.au

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**Jesus loves children – He cured them physically, He nurtured them spiritually and He comforted them emotionally, not only because of their innocence but because they truly loved Him in return.**

#### James

They are near the village. Some children are playing in the road and one of them runs into Jesus' legs and would have fallen if He were not quick in getting hold of him. The child cries just the same, as if he had been hurt and Jesus, holding him in His arms, says: ... Do you like honey? Yes? Well, if you are good, you will eat a honey which is sweeter than the honey of your bees."

"Where? When?"

"When, after a life of loyalty to God, you will go to Him."

"I know that I cannot go there unless the Messiah comes. My mother says that now, we in Israel are like many Moses and we die seeing the Promised Land. She says that we are there, waiting to go in, and that only the Messiah will make us go in."

"What a clever little Israelite! Well, I tell you that when you die, you will go to Paradise at once because the Messiah will already have opened the gates of Heaven. But you must be good."

"Mummy! Mummy!" The child slides down from Jesus' arms and runs towards a young woman, who is entering her house holding a copper amphora. "Mummy! The new Rabbi told me that I will go to Paradise at once when I die and I will eat so much honey... if I am good. I will be good!"

"[May] God grant it! I am sorry, Master, if he troubled You. He is so lively!"

"Innocence does not trouble, woman. May God bless you, because you are a mother who is bringing her children up in the knowledge of the Law."

[...] "Do You like children, Master?"

"Yes, I do, because they are pure... sincere... and affectionate."

**(The Poem Vol. 1 pp. 262-3, The Gospel Vol. 1, pp. 311-2)**

#### Joel at Bethsaida

[Jesus] goes out and walks to the beach near the children. He asks them: "What are you doing?"

"We wanted to play at war. But he does not want to, and we are playing at fishing."

The boy who does not want to play at war is a frail little fellow with a most bright face. Perhaps he is aware that, as frail as he is, he would get a beating in making "war" and so he pleads for peace. [...] "But he does not want to make war because he always loses."

Jesus smiles and says: "We must not reprove what is harmful to us simply because it is harmful to us. We must reprove a thing when it is harmful to everybody. If a person says: "I do not want that because I would lose", that person is selfish. Instead, the good child of God says: "Brothers, I know I would win, but I say to you: don't let us do that because you would suffer a loss". Oh! That fellow has understood the main precept! Who can tell Me which is the main precept?"

The eleven mouths say all together: "You shall love your God with all your strength and your neighbour as yourself" "Oh! You are clever children. Do you all go to school?"

"Yes, we do."

"Who is the most clever?"

"Him." It is the frail little fellow who does not want war.

"What is your name?"

"Joel."

A great name! He says: "... let the weakling say: 'I am strong'. But strong in what? In the Law of the true God... Which of you wants to be amongst those who will be judged saints of God?"

Me! Me! Me!"

"Will you love the Messiah, then?"

"Yes! Yes! You! You! It's You we love. We know who You are! Simon and James have told us, and our mothers have told us. Take us with You!"

"Yes, I will take you if you are good. No more bad words, no more arrogance, quarrels, no answering back to your parents. Prayer, study, work, obedience. And I will love you and come with you."

The children are all round Jesus. They look like a gaily-coloured corolla around a long, deep-blue pistil.

**(The Poem Vol. 1 pp. 271-2, The Gospel Vol. 1 pp. 321-2)**

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### John

[Jesus] blesses also a little boy whose little legs are badly fractured and whom no doctor would cure. They all, in fact, said: "It is useless, they are fractured high up, near the spine." His mother is talking, weeping as she explains: "He was running with his little sister in the village street. A Herodian came at full speed on his wagon and ran him over. I thought he was dead. But it is worse. See. I am keeping him on this board... because there is nothing else to be done. And he suffers, because the bone pierces his flesh. And later, when it will no longer pierce him, he will suffer because he will be compelled to lie on his back."

"Is it very painful?" Jesus pitifully asks the weeping child.

"Yes, it is."

"Where?"

"Here...and here" and with his little hesitant hand he touches his kidneys and his back. "The board is hard and I want to move, I..." and he cries desperately.

"Shall I take you in My arms? Will you come? I will take you up there, and you will see all the people when I am speaking."

"Yes..." (his "Yes" is full of keen desire). The poor little thing stretches out his arms imploringly.

"Come then."

"But he cannot, Master, it is impossible! It hurts him too much...I cannot even move him to wash him."

"I will not hurt him."

"The doctor..."

"The doctor is the doctor, I am I. Why have you come?"

"Because You are the Messiah" replies the woman, who goes pale, then blushes, moved by hope and despair at the same time.

"Well, then? Come, My dear little one." And Jesus passes one arm under the motionless legs, and the other one under his shoulders and takes the child in His arms and asks him: "Am I hurting you? No? Well, say goodbye to your mummy and let us go."

And He goes with His load through the crowd that opens out to let Him pass. He goes to the end of the room, He climbs on to the kind of platform which they built for Him, so that He may be seen by everybody, also by those in the yard, He asks for a stool and He sits down, He adjusts the child on His knees and asks him: "Do you like this? Now, be good and listen" and He starts speaking, gesticulating with one hand only, His right one, because He is holding the child with His left one. The little fellow looks at the people and is very happy to see something. He smiles at his mother whose heart is palpitating with hope at the other end of the room, and he plays with the cord of Jesus' tunic and with His soft fair beard and with a lock of His long hair.

"Do you wish to see the faith of a child to learn to have faith? Look. You all feel sorry for the little one whom I am clasping to My chest and who, contrary to what doctors and his mother said, has not cried while sitting in My lap. See? For a long time he has done nothing but cry day and night without getting any rest, instead here he has not cried and has fallen asleep placidly against My heart. I asked him: "Do you want to come in My arms?" and he replied: "Yes", without considering his miserable state, the probable pain he might feel as a result of being moved. He saw love on My face, he said: "Yes" and he came. And he felt no pain. He was happy to be up here and see

things. After being confined to that flat board, he enjoyed lying on the soft warmth of a body and not on the hard wood. He smiled, he played and he fell asleep still holding a lock of My hair in his tiny hand. I will now wake him with a kiss..." and Jesus kisses the brown hair of the child who wakes up smiling.

"What is your name?"

"John"

"Listen, John. Do you want to walk? Do you wish to go to your mummy and say to her: 'The Messiah blesses you on account of your faith?'"

"Yes" replies the little one clapping his hands. He then asks: "Will You make me go? On the meadows? No more the ugly hard board? No more the doctors who hurt me?"

"No more, never again."

"Ah! How I love You!" and he throws his arms round Jesus' neck and kisses Him, and to kiss Him better, with a jump he kneels on Jesus' knees and a hail of kisses descends on the forehead, the eyes, the cheeks of Jesus.

The child, who had been paralysed up to this point, in his joy, has not even realised that he has been able to move. But the shouting of his mother and of the crowd, rouses him and he turns round surprised. The large innocent eyes of his thin face look around inquiringly. Still on his knees, with his right arm round Jesus' neck, he asks Him confidentially - pointing at the crowd in tumult and at his mother, who from the other end is calling him, joining his name to Jesus' at the same time: "John! Jesus!"

"Why are the people and my mother shouting? What is the matter with them? Are You Jesus?"

"Yes, I am. The people are shouting because they are happy that you can walk. Goodbye, little John (Jesus kisses and blesses him). Go to your mummy and be good."

*(The Poem Vol.1 pp. 676-80, The Gospel Vol. 2 pp. 323-8)*

### Caius Lucius – a Roman boy

A little boy, about eight-years-old, who is playing in a corner with two other little lads, comes near Jesus. He is a strong boy with very dark hair and a fair complexion.

"Who are you?"

"I am Lucius, Caius Lucius, of Caius Marius, a Roman, the son of the Decurion of the guards who remained here after he was wounded."

"And who are those?"

"They are Isaac and Toby. But we must not say, because they are not allowed to play with us. The Jews would hit them."

"Why?"

"Because they are Jews and I am a Roman. They are forbidden to associate with us."

"But you are playing with them. Why?"

"Because we are fond of one another. We always play together dice or jumping. But we have to hide."

"And would you love Me? I am a Jew too and I am not a boy. Just imagine: I am a Master, something like a priest."

"What do I care? If You love me, I will love You. And I love You because You love me."

"How do you know?"

"Because You are good. Who is good, loves."

"There you are, My friends. That is the secret to love: to be good. Then you love without considering to which faith other people belong."

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Arid Jesus, holding little Caius Lucius by the hand, goes and caresses the little Jewish children, who are frightened and hide in a passage way and He says to them: "Good children are angels. Angels have one fatherland only: Paradise. They have only one religion: the religion of the One God. They have only one Temple: the Heart of God. Like little angels, always love one another."

*(The Poem Vol. 2 pp. 49-50, The Gospel Vol. 2 pp. 486-8)*

### Zacharias

When Jesus stops to let a large herd pass, the shepherds point Him out and gather together. They consult with one another but dare no more. Jesus puts an end to their doubts by walking through the herd, which has stopped to graze on the thick grass. He goes straight to caress a little shepherd, who is standing towards the centre of the woolly bleating mass of sheep. He asks the boy:

"Are they yours?" Jesus knows very well that they are not the boy's, but He wants him to speak.

"No, Lord. I am with those men. And the herds belong to many owners. We are all together for fear of the bandits."

"What is your name?"

"Zacharias, the son of Isaac. But my father died and I work as a servant because we are poor and my mother has three more sons younger than I am."

"Has your father been long dead?"

"Three years, Lord... and since then I have never smiled because my mother always weeps and I have no one who caresses me any more... I am the first born and my father's death has made a man of me, while I was still a child... But I must not weep but earn some money... But it is so difficult!" Tears stream down his face, which is too serious for his age.

The shepherds have drawn near and so have the apostles. A group of men in the midst of moving sheep.

"You are not fatherless, Zacharias. You have a holy Father in Heaven, Who always loves you if you are good, and your father has not ceased loving you because he is in Abraham's bosom. You must believe that. And because of such faith you must endeavour to become better and better." Jesus speaks kindly and caresses the boy.

And you, My boy, remember that you are never alone. God sees you and so does the spirit of your father. When something upsets you and induces you to do wrong, say: "No, I do not want to be an orphan forever and ever". You would be, if you damned your soul by sinning.

Be good. I bless you so that all goodness may be with you. If we were going the same way, I would continue to speak to you for a long time. But the sun is rising and you must go, and so do I. Your task is to protect the sheep from the heat, Mine to relieve men of another ardour, a more dreadful one, the passions of their hearts. Pray that they may consider Me as their Shepherd. Goodbye, Zacharias. Be good. Peace be with you."

Jesus kisses the little shepherd and blesses him and while the flock moves slowly away, His eyes follow him. He then resumes His way.

*(The Poem Vol. 2 pp. 216-19, The Gospel Vol. 3 pp. 186-9)*

### Benjamin of Capernaum

A little boy of seven- or eight-years-old runs tripping after Jesus. He overtakes the vociferous group of the apostles and reaches Him. He is a lovely boy with short curly dark-

brown hair. His dark eyes shine intelligently in his little dark face. He calls the Master confidentially as if he were very familiar with Him. He says: "Jesus, will You let me come with You as far as Your house?"

"Does your mother know?" asks Jesus smiling at him kindly.

"Yes, she does."

"Is it true?" although smiling, Jesus casts a piercing glance at him.

"Yes, Jesus, it is true."

"Come then."

The boy jumps for joy and takes the left hand of Jesus Who stretches it out to him. With how much loving reliance the child places his little swarthy hand into Jesus' long hand! I wish I could do the same myself!

"Tell me a nice parable, Jesus" says the boy skipping beside Jesus and looking up at Him, his face shining with joy. Jesus also looks at him with a cheerful smile, which opens His lips shaded by His moustache and His reddish golden beard, which shines like gold in the sun. His dark sapphire eyes sparkle with joy while He looks at the child.

"What will you do with a parable? It is not a game."

"It is better than a game. When I go to bed, I think about it then I dream of it and the following day, I remember it and I repeat to myself to be good. It makes me good."

"Do you remember it?"

"Yes, I do. Shall I repeat to you all the ones You told me?"

"You are clever, Benjamin, more clever than men who forget. As a prize I will tell you a parable."

[...] And that is the end of the parable, Benjamin. Now can you tell Me: who is that good shepherd?"

"It's You, Jesus."

"And who is the little lamb?"

"It's me, Jesus."

"But I will be going away now. You will forget Me."

"No, Jesus. I will not forget You because I love You."

"Your love will come to an end when you no longer see Me."

"I will repeat to myself the words that You spoke to me and it will be the same as if You were present. I will love You and obey You thus. And tell me, Jesus: Will You remember Benjamin?"

"Always."

"And how will You remember?"

"I will say to Myself that you promised to love and obey Me and I will thus remember you."

"And will You give me Your Kingdom?"

"I will, if you are good."

"I will be good."

[...] Jesus stops and looks at the little face, which is lit by love more than by the sun. Jesus' joy is so deep that another sun seems to be burning in His soul and shining through His eyes.

*(The Poem Vol. 3 pp. 424-33, The Gospel Vol.5 pp. 388-99)*

### Martial – Orphan Roman Boy

Then a little swarthy face appears from behind the curtain separating the room from a corridor and casts sidelong glances, fearful and curious at the same time.

"Who is that boy?" Jesus asks John.

"I don't know, Lord. He was not here on previous occasions. It is true that since I have been with You, I

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have never come here on my father's business. Come here, child."

The boy comes forward with short steps.

"Who are you?" [asks Jesus]

"I am not telling you."

"Why?"

"I don't want to hear bad words said to me. If you say them, I will answer back, and Joseph does not want that."

"That's something new! Master, what do You think of that?" and John laughs, amused as he is with the reasons of the little fellow. Jesus also smiles and lifts His hand to draw the child to Himself and watches him. He then says: "And do you know who I am?"

"Yes, I know! You are the Messiah, Who will conquer all the world, then no bad words will be spoken to children like me."

"You are not from Israel, are you?"

"I am circumcised... and it was very painful. But... but hunger also was painful and... and not to have mummy any more... and nobody... But it hurts also to hear that one... that we..." he weeps having lost his [initial] self-confidence.

"He must be a foreign orphan, John. Joseph must have accepted him out of pity and had him circumcised..." explains Jesus to John, who is amazed at the child's reasoning and tears. And Jesus lifts the boy bodily and puts him on His knees. "Tell Me your name, child. I love you. Jesus loves all children and little orphans in particular. I have one as well, and his name is Marjiam and he..."

"And I, too, because I (his thin voice becomes a hardly audible whisper) because I am a Roman..."

"I told you. And you are an orphan, are you not?"

"Yes... I do not remember my father. My mother... yes, I remember her. She died when I had already grown up... and I was left all alone, and nobody wanted me. From Caesarea on foot, following wayfarers, after the master had gone far away. And so hungry. And if I said my name, [i received] blows... Because they understood by my name [I was Roman], eh?! Then I came here for a feast and I was hungry. I went into the stables with a caravan and I hid in the straw to eat the forage and carobs of the donkeys. And a donkey bit me and I screamed and they rushed in and wanted to hit me. But Joseph said: "No, He has done it and He says that we must do what He does. And I am taking the boy and will make him an Israelite." And he took me and looked after me with Mary and he gave me another name because mine... But my mother called me Martial..." and tears begin to stream down his cheeks once again.

"And I will call you Martial as your mother did. It was very kind of Joseph to do what he did. You must love him."

"Yes, but I must love You more. He says so. He always says: "If one day you should meet Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah, love Him with your whole being, because it is through Him that you have been saved from error."

**(The Poem Vol. 4 pp. 582-92, The Gospel Vol.8 pp. 71-83)**

### David

[Jesus] is interrupted in His meditation by the arrival of a little boy who wants to say goodbye to Him before leaving for Jerusalem. "Jesus! Jesus!" he calls at each step, as he cannot see Jesus because the low wall conceals Him from

the sight of whoever is below. And Jesus is so engrossed in thought that He does not hear the light voice or the step of the child, which is as light as a dove's... so when the boy arrives on the terrace, He is still in the same painful position. And the little boy is frightened. He stops on the threshold, puts a finger between his lips and thinks... he then makes up his mind and moves slowly forward... he is now almost behind Jesus' back... he bends to see what He is doing... and says: "No, lovely Jesus! Don't weep! Why? Because of those bad ugly men of yesterday? My father was saying to Jairus that they are not worthy of You. But You must not weep. I love You. And my little sister, and James and Toby, and Johanna, and Mary and Micah and all the children in Capernaum, they all love You. Don't weep any more..." and he clasps Jesus' neck caressing Him and concludes: "Otherwise I will weep, too and I will weep during all the journey..."

"No, David, I am not weeping any more. You have consoled Me. Are you alone? When are you leaving?"

"After sunset. We are going by boat as far as Tiberias. Come with us. My father loves You, you know?"

"Yes, I know, My dear. But I must go to other children... Thank you for coming to say goodbye to Me. I bless you, little David. Let us kiss each other goodbye and then you will go back to your mother. Does she know that you are here?..."

"No, she doesn't. I ran away because I did not see You with Your disciples and I thought that You might be weeping."

"I am not weeping any more, as you can see. Go back to your mother, who perhaps is looking for you and is worried. Goodbye. Watch the donkeys of the caravans. See? They stop everywhere."

"Are You really not weeping any more?"

"No. I am no longer grieved. You have comforted Me. Thank you, My child."

**(The Poem Vol. 3 pp. 448-51, The Gospel Vol. 5 pp. 418-20)**

### Michael

The little fellow seen a short time ago, 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. He reaches the disciples and tries to step over them to go and look at Jesus once again. ...[Matthias] smiles, 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.

"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: "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.

**(The Poem Vol. 3 pp.751-5, The Gospel Vol. 6 p. 311-14)**