

VIGIL OF THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD ON CHRISTMAS EVE

(Mt. 1:18-21) (*Audio Year A Track 006*)

(*Poem* Vol. 1, pp. 79-82, 92-3, 96, 121-7, 71-2 – *Gospel* Vol. 1, pp. 98-101, 113-4, 118-9, 149-57, 88-90; *Notebooks 1945-50*, p 135)

(Mary, betrothed but not yet living with Joseph, is in a little room of Her house in Nazareth...)

Looking fifteen years old at most, Her face is beautifully flushed, and Her eyes are lost behind some sweet thought... And yet those eyes are smiling... Mary's face - flushed and circled by the plaits She wears, which are rolled up like a crown round Her head - seems a beautiful flower, emerging from Her plain white dress.

She prays: "Most High Lord God, do not delay any longer in sending Your Servant to bring peace to the world. Grant us the favourable time and the pure and prolific virgin, for the coming of Your Christ. Father, Holy Father, grant Me, Your servant, to offer My life for this purpose. Grant Me to die after seeing Your Light and Your Justice on earth, and after knowing that our Redemption has been accomplished... Come, come, O Spirit of the Lord. Come to the faithful who are expecting You. Come, Prince of Peace!..." Mary remains absorbed in Her prayer...

The curtain suddenly moves... and a pearl white light, mixed with pure silver... makes the colours of the cloths brighter, and Mary's raised face more spiritual... And the Archangel prostrates himself...

He must necessarily take on a human appearance... It is a face, body, eyes, mouth, hair and hands like ours. But they are not our dull matter. It is a light that has taken the colour of flesh, of eyes, hair, and lips. A light that moves and smiles, looks and speaks.

"Hail, Mary, full of Grace, Hail!" The voice is a sweet arpeggio, like pearls thrown on a precious metal plate.

Mary is startled, and lowers Her head. She is even more startled when She sees the shining creature kneeling about a metre from Her, and looking at Her with infinite veneration, his hands crossed over his chest.

Mary jumps to Her feet and squeezes against the wall. She turns pale and red alternately. Her face shows surprise and fear. She subconsciously presses Her hands against Her breasts, hiding them under Her large sleeves. And She stoops, trying to conceal Her body as much as possible. An attitude of gentle modesty...

"Do not fear, Mary!" says the Archangel. "I am Gabriel, the Angel of God. My Lord has sent me to You. Do not be afraid, because You have found grace in the eyes of God. You will conceive and bear a Son, and You will call Him "Jesus": He will be great, and will be called Son of the Most High (and such He really will be). The Lord

God will give Him the throne of His Ancestor David. He will rule over the House of Jacob for ever, and His reign will have no end. Understand: O Holy Virgin loved by God, Daughter blessed by Him, called to be the Mother of His Son, the Son You will generate.”

Mary asks: “How can this come about, since I do not know man? Perhaps the Lord God will no longer accept the offer of His maidservant, and does not want Me a Virgin for His love?”

“Not by deed of man You will be a mother, Mary. You are the Eternal Virgin, the Holy Virgin of God. The Holy Spirit will come upon You, and the power of the Most High will cover You with its shadow. So the Child born of You will be called Holy, and Son of God.

Our Lord God can do everything. Elizabeth, the barren one, in her old age, has conceived a son who will be the Prophet of Your Son, and will prepare His ways... Until the end of centuries, you will both be called blessed, because of the grace of the Lord which has come to You. It has come particularly to You. And by means of You, Grace has come to all peoples.

Elizabeth is in her sixth month, and her burden lifts her to joy. It will lift her even more, when she hears of Your joy. Nothing is impossible to the Lord, Mary, full of Grace.

What shall I tell my Lord? Let no thought whatsoever disturb You. He Will protect Your interests, if You trust in Him. The world, Heaven, and the Eternal Father are awaiting Your word!”

Mary crosses Her hands over Her breast, and bowing down deeply, She says: “I am the handmaid of the Lord. Let what you have said, be done to Me.”

The Angel shines with joy. He kneels in adoration, because he certainly sees the Spirit of God descend upon the Virgin bent down in compliance. He then disappears...

(One evening soon afterwards, Mary is visited by Joseph. He says he will bring some flowers which a Roman centurion has promised to give him, and will plant them for Her...)

Mary smiles and thanks him. Then there is a silence. Joseph looks at Mary's fair head, bowed over Her embroidery. A look of angelical love. Certainly, if an angel were to love a woman with the love of a husband, he would look at her like this.

Then Mary, as if She were taking a sudden decision, lays the embroidery on Her lap and says: “I have something to tell you. I never have anything to say, because you

know how retired I am, living here... I heard that our relative Elizabeth, Zacharias' wife, is about to have a child..."

Joseph opens his eyes wide, and exclaims: "At her age?"

"At her age" replies Mary, smiling. "The Lord can do everything, and now He is giving this joy to our relative."

"How do you know? Is the news certain?"

"A messenger came. One who would not tell lies. I would like to go to Elizabeth's, to help her and tell her that I am rejoicing with her. If you will allow Me..."

"Mary, You are my lady, and I am Your servant. Whatever You do is well done. When would You like to go?"

"As soon as possible. But I shall be away for some months."

"And I will count the days, waiting for You. Go, and don't worry. I will look after the house and Your little garden... Before Passover, I must go to Jerusalem to buy certain things for my work. If You can wait for a few days, I will come with You as far as Jerusalem... When You want to come back, You can let me know, and I will come and meet You."

"You are so good, Joseph. May the Lord reward you with His blessings, and keep sorrow away from you. I always pray to Him for that."

The chaste couple smile at each other angelically...

Then Joseph gets up... and says goodbye to Mary...

Mary looks at him going out, and sighs rather sadly. She then lifts Her eyes to Heaven. She is certainly praying...

(A few days later, Joseph and Mary travel to Jerusalem...)

The first thing they do when they arrive is to go to the Temple... When they come out, they enter a house which apparently belongs to people they know. They take some refreshment there, and Mary rests until Joseph comes back with a little old man. "This man is going Your way. You will not have to travel a long way by Yourself, to get to Your relatives. You can trust him, because I know him."

They get on their donkeys again, Joseph goes with Mary as far as one of the city gates... and they part there. Mary proceeds with the little old man...

In front of the saddle, She has now the little trunk which Joseph's donkey had carried earlier... She is [wearing a] dark blue dress and white veil that protects Her from the sun. How beautiful She is!

(The scene moves forward to Mary's return from her visit. Elizabeth and Zacharias have come with Her, and their new-born son John, to Jerusalem, for his presentation at the Temple. After the presentation, they wait for Joseph to arrive, to take Mary home to Nazareth. Mary is now noticeably pregnant...)

The time passes quickly, but there is no sign of Joseph. Mary controls Her grief, lulling the baby, but it is obvious that She is worried. Although it is so warm that everybody is perspiring, She has not taken off Her mantle, concerned as She is to conceal Her condition.

At long last, Joseph is announced by a loud knocking at the door. Mary's face shines, cheerful again.

Joseph greets Her, because She is the first to go and meet him and greet him reverently. "The Lord's blessing on you, Mary!" He says.

"And on you, Joseph. Praised be the Lord that you have come! Zacharias and Elizabeth were about to leave, to be home before night."

Joseph says: "Your messenger arrived in Nazareth when I was at Cana, working there... Although I have travelled without stopping, I am late, because the donkey lost one of his shoes. Please forgive me."

"I am to be forgiven by you" Mary replies, "because I have been away from Nazareth for such a long time! But see, they were so happy to have Me with them..."

"You have done well, Woman..." says Joseph.

(After a little while, it is time for Mary and Joseph to leave...)

They get on their donkeys. Joseph has fastened Mary's little trunk to his saddle... And before She gets on Her donkey, he makes sure that Her saddle is properly fastened. I see that Joseph looks at Mary when she mounts Her saddle. But he doesn't say anything. Their journey begins...

(Mary comments to Maria Valtorta on Joseph's dilemma, and his passion...)

It began in Jerusalem when he noticed My condition. And it lasted several days... And only because of the holiness of My just spouse, it was contained in such a dignified and secret form, that it has been hardly noticed throughout centuries.

Oh! Our first Passion! Who can feel its intimate and silent intensity?

Who can describe My pain, when I realised that Heaven had not yet heard My prayer by revealing the mystery to Joseph?

I understood that he was not aware of it... He would have adored that Word - enclosed in My womb - with the acts of veneration which are due to God, and which he would not have failed to accomplish...

Who can measure My struggle against the dismay that endeavoured to overwhelm Me, in order to convince Me that I had hoped in vain in the Lord? Oh! I think it was the furious rage of Satan! I sensed doubt rising behind My back, and stretching its icy claws to imprison My soul and prevent it from praying...

Who can truly tell Joseph's pain, his thoughts, the confusion of his feelings? Like a little boat caught in a great storm, he was in a vortex of conflicting ideas... He was, to all appearances, a man betrayed by his wife. He saw his good reputation and the esteem of his world collapse around him... Above all, he perceived that his love and esteem for Me had fallen, struck to death, before the evidence of a deed.

In this respect, his holiness shines brighter than Mine. I give this witness with the affection of a spouse, because I want you to love My Joseph - this wise, prudent, patient and good man - who is not separated from the mystery of Redemption. On the contrary, he is closely connected to it, because he suffered for it, consuming himself in sorrow. He saved your Saviour: at the cost of his own sacrifice, and because of his holiness.

Had he not been so holy, he would have acted in a human way, denouncing Me as an adulteress, so that I should be stoned. And the Son of My sin would have perished with Me.

If he had been less holy, God would not have granted him His light [in a dream], as guidance in his trial. But Joseph was holy. His pure spirit lived in God. His charity was ardent and strong. And out of charity, he saved your Saviour for you, both when he refrained from accusing Me before the elders, and later, when he saved Jesus in Egypt, leaving everything, with prompt obedience...

I was aware of his suffering, which I could not alleviate. In fact I had to obey the command of God, Who had said to Me: "Be silent!"

After we arrived in Nazareth, I saw him go away with an abrupt goodbye. He was bent as if he had aged in a short time, and I noticed that he no longer came to see Me in the evening as he used to. I tell you, My children, that My heart wept very bitterly... I had to fight despair, and Satan's insinuation. And hope, hope, hope. And pray, pray, pray. And forgive, forgive, forgive Joseph's suspicion, his disturbance, and his just despair.

My children: it is necessary to hope, to pray, to forgive: to obtain God's intervention in our favour. You must live your passions, because you deserved them with your sins. I can teach you how to overcome them, and turn them into joy: Hope beyond measure. Pray with confidence. Forgive, to be forgiven. God's forgiveness will be the peace you desire, My children...

(The scene moves forward to another vision of Maria Valtorta...)

I see the little orchard [behind the house] in Nazareth. Mary is spinning, in the shade of a very thick apple-tree overloaded with apples... The beautiful colour... of Her cheeks... has disappeared... and Her eyes are swollen...

Mary starts, at a loud resolute knocking. She lays the distaff and spindle down, and rises to go [through the house] and open the door. Her dress is loose and wide, but it does not conceal the roundness of Her pelvis.

Joseph is standing in front of Her. Mary turns pale... and looks at Joseph with sad, enquiring eyes. Joseph looks at Her with imploring ones. They are both silent, looking at each other. Then Mary says: "At this time, Joseph? Is there anything you need? What do you want to tell Me? Come in."

Joseph enters, and closes the door. He is still silent.

"Speak, Joseph. What is it you want from Me?"

"I want You to forgive me." Joseph bends down, as if he wanted to kneel. But Mary - Who is always so reserved in touching him - seizes him firmly by the shoulders and stops him.

Mary's face blushes and goes pale in rapid succession... "You want Me to forgive you? I have nothing to forgive you for, Joseph. I can only thank you once again for everything you have done here while I was away, and for your love for Me."

Joseph looks at Her, and I can see two large tears welling up in the cavity of his deep eyes... "Forgive me, Mary. I mistrusted You. Now I know. I am not worthy of having such a treasure. I lacked in charity, I accused You in my heart, I accused You unfairly, because I did not ask You to tell me the truth. I sinned against God's law, because I did not love You as I loved myself..."

"Oh! no! You have not sinned!"

"Yes, I have... I was not giving You the possibility of defending Yourself, because I was about to take a decision without questioning You... I offended You with my suspicion... Whoever suspects, does not know. And I did not know You, as I should have. Oh! the torment I suffered... three days of torture, forgive me, Mary."

"I have nothing to forgive you for. On the contrary, I ask you to forgive Me, for the pain I caused you."

"Oh! Yes, it was a great pain! What a torture! Look! I was told this morning that my temples are white haired and my face wrinkled. These past days have been more

than ten years of my life! But why, Mary, have You been so humble as to conceal Your glory: from me, Your spouse, and so allow me to suspect You?"...

Mary lays Her tiny hand on his head, and smiles. She seems to be absolving him. And She whispers: "If I had not been humble in the most perfect manner, I would not have deserved to conceive the Expected One, Who is coming to pay for the sin of pride that ruined man. And then I obeyed... God had requested such obedience. It cost Me so much... because of you: because of the pain that you were to suffer. But I could only obey.

I am the Handmaid of the Lord, and servants do not discuss the orders they receive. They fulfil them Joseph, even if they cause bitter tears. " Mary weeps quietly, while speaking. So quietly that Joseph, bent down as he is, does not notice, until a tear falls on the floor.

He then lifts his head... presses Mary's little hands in his dark strong ones, and he kisses the tips of her fingers...

"Now we shall have to arrange for..." Joseph does not say anything else, but he looks at Mary's body. And She becomes purple, and sits suddenly, to avoid Her figure being exposed... Joseph continues: "We shall have to make haste. I will come here... We will complete the wedding... Next week. Is that all right?"

"Whatever you do is all right, Joseph. You are the head of the family, I am your servant..."

"But You... I am a poor man, the poorest of God's children!..."

And Mary says: "Jesus is coming to us poor people, to make us rich in God, He is coming to the two of us, because we are the poorest, and we admit it. Rejoice, Joseph. The House of David has the King long waited for, and our home will become more splendid than Solomon's palace. Because Heaven will be here!..." Mary cries with joy. Such happy tears!

And Joseph, who is now kneeling at Her feet, is weeping with his head almost hidden in Mary's wide dress...

(Jesus dictates this message to Maria Valtorta:)

"You have seen how Joseph, not by human culture, but by supernatural education, can read in the sealed book of the Immaculate Virgin, and how he borders upon prophetic truths by his "seeing" a superhuman mystery, where others could only see a great virtue. Since he is imbued with this wisdom, which is a breath of the power of God and a definite emanation of the Almighty, he sails with a secure spirit the sea of this mystery of grace which is Mary... This is where only God can hear voices, and

hear those who are well liked by God, because they are His faithful servants and are full of Him.

The wisdom of the Just man - which increases by his union and Closeness to Mary, Full of Grace - prepares him to penetrate the deepest secrets of God, and enables him to protect and defend them from the snares of man and demon. And in the meantime it invigorates him. It makes the just man a saint, and it makes the saint the guardian of the Spouse and of the Son of God...

And to prevent profane eyes from prying into the mystery, he places himself, seal upon the seal, as an archangel of fire on the threshold of Paradise, within which the Eternal Father takes His delight, "walking in the cool of the evening" and talking to Her Who is His love, Garden of lilies in bloom, Air scented with perfumes, fresh morning Breeze, lovely Star, Delight of God. The new Eve is there, in front of him, not bone from his bones, nor flesh from his flesh, but companion of his life, living Ark of God, Whom he receives in guardianship and Whom he must return to God as pure as he received Her.

'Spouse to God' was written in the immaculate pages of that mystical book... And when in the hour of trial suspicion hissed its torture, he suffered as a man and as a servant of God, as no man suffered, because of the suspected sacrilege...

Was Joseph not on Golgotha? Do you think he is not amongst the co-redeemers? I tell you solemnly that he was the first and therefore he is great in the eyes of God. Great for his sacrifice, his patience, his perseverance, his faith. Which faith is greater than this one, that believed without seeing the miracles of the Messiah?

Praise be to My putative father... Praise be to the magnificent reader of the sealed Book. He was imbued with Wisdom to be able to understand the mysteries of Grace, and chosen to protect the Salvation of the world from the snares of all enemies. "

(And concerning Mary, Jesus says to Maria:) "...To the world she appeared as 'the wife' known by a man. And to her man - who never knew her as a wife according to the flesh - she appeared as 'the adulteress'.... There is no greater mortification than this ... ! She sang her Ecce Ancilla Domini more forcefully! And God rewarded her, by giving her back Joseph's esteem..."