

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

(Luke 7: 11-16)

(*Poem* Vol. 2, pp. 252-5; *Gospel* Vol. 3, pp. 230-4;
Notebooks 1943, p. 355; *Notebooks* 1944, p. 373)

(Maria Valtorta writes about the town of Nain, which Jesus is approaching on His travels...)

Nain must have been a town of some importance in the days of Jesus. It is not a large town, but is well built, surrounded by its walls, lying on a low pleasant hill - an offshoot of the Little Hermon - and commanding a very fertile plain which stretches towards the north-east.

One arrives here coming from Endor, after crossing a little river which flows into the Jordan. But neither the Jordan nor its valley can be seen any longer, because they are concealed by hills which form an arch shaped like a question mark in the east.

Jesus follows a main road which links the lake region to the Hermon and its villages. Many inhabitants of Endor walk behind Him, in animated conversation with one another.

Only a short distance separates the group of the apostles from the walls: about two hundred yards, at most. And as the main road runs straight to one of the town gates - which is wide open because it is broad daylight - it is possible to see what is happening in the inner side of the walls. Thus Jesus - Who is speaking to the apostles and the new convert - sees a funeral coming towards them, with a great noise of people weeping, and similar eastern displays.

'Shall we go and see, Master?' Jesus is asked, (as many of the inhabitants of Endor are already rushing to see).

'Yes, let us go' says Jesus condescendingly.

'Oh! It must be a boy. See how many flowers and ribbons there are on the bier' says Judas Iscariot to John.

'Or it is probably a virgin.' replies John.

'No, it is certainly a young man, because of the colours they have used. And there is no myrtle either...' says Bartholomew.

The funeral comes to the outside of the walls. It is not possible to see what there is on the bier, which is carried shoulder high by the bearers. One understands that there is a corpse, enveloped in bandages and covered by a sheet - only because of its outline - and that it is the body of a fully grown person, because it is as long as the bier.

A veiled woman is walking beside, weeping, supported by relatives or friends... And when a bearer trips on a stone or a rise in the ground, or stumbles and causes the bier to shake, the mother moans: 'Oh! no! Be careful! My boy has suffered so much!' and she raises her trembling hand to caress the edge of the bier. And as she is unable to do anything else, she kisses the veils and the ribbons, which are blown by a gentle breeze and which lightly touch the immobile corpse.

Peter, sympathetic, with his good keen eyes welling up with tears, whispers: 'She is the mother.' But he is not the only one whose eyes are shining with tears at the sight. Also the Zealot, Andrew, John, and even the ever merry Thomas have tears in their eyes. They are all deeply moved. Judas Iscariot whispers: 'If it were I! Oh! Poor mother of mine...'

Jesus - the kindness of Whose eyes is so deep as to be unbearable - directs His steps towards the bier.

The mother - who is now sobbing louder, because the funeral is about to turn towards the open sepulcher - pushes Jesus aside determinedly, when she sees that He wants to touch the bier. I wonder what she is afraid of, in her grief. She shouts: 'He is mine!' and looks at Jesus with staring eyes.

'I know, mother. He is yours.'

'He is my only son! Why should he die, he was so good and dear, he was my joy, and I am a widow. Why?' The crowd of the hired mourners mourn more loudly, forming a chorus with the mother who continues: 'Why he, and not I?... The offspring must live, otherwise why was my womb torn to give birth to a man?' and she strikes her abdomen wildly and desperately.

'Do not do that! Do not weep, mother.' Jesus takes her hands, clenching them firmly in His left hand, while with His right one He touches the bier, saying to the bearers: 'Stop and put the bier down.'

The bearers obey and lower the little bed, which rests on its four legs.

Jesus takes the sheet covering the dead boy, and pulls it back, uncovering the corpse.

The mother shouts...: 'Daniel!'

Jesus, still clenching the mother's hands in His, stands up, His eyes are imposingly bright, and the power of a miracle shines majestically on His face. Lowering His right hand, He orders with the full strength of His voice: 'Young man! I tell you: get up!'

The dead boy, enveloped in bandages as he is, sits up on the little bed and calls: (stammers) 'Mother!' He calls her with the stammering frightened voice of a terrified child.

'He is yours, woman. I give him to you in the name of God. Help him to get rid of the sudarium. And be happy.'

And Jesus makes the gesture of withdrawing. [But this is] impossible! The crowds push Him against the bier, on which the mother has thrown herself, groping for the bandages, endeavouring to be quick, while the child-like moaning implores: 'Mother! Mother!'

The sudarium and bandages are undone, and mother and son can embrace each other. They do so without bothering about the sticky balms, which the mother removes from his dear face and hands, with his bandages. As she has no clothes to put on him, she takes off her mantle and envelops him in it, caressing him all the time...

Jesus looks at her... he looks at the loving group, close together on the edge of the little bed - which is no longer a bier - and He weeps.

Judas Iscariot sees His tears and asks: 'Why are You weeping, my Lord?'

Jesus turns His face towards him and says: 'I am thinking of My Mother...'

The woman then takes her son by the hand... and says: 'You, too, my son. Bless this Holy man Who has restored you to life and to your mother.' And she bends to kiss Jesus' tunic, while the crowd sings hosannas to God and to His Messiah...

And the crowds exclaim: 'Blessed be the God of Israel. Blessed be the Messiah, His Messenger! Blessed be Jesus, Son of David! A great Prophet is risen among us! God has really visited His people! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!'

At last Jesus can steal away and enter the town. The crowd follows... and a man rushes towards Jesus and bows deeply to Him. 'Please come and stay under my roof.'

And Jesus replies: 'I cannot. Passover prevents Me from making any stop... I will certainly come again, and I will stay with you in Nain for several days. Now let Me go.'

The man does not insist any more. He only says: 'As You said. I will wait for You.'

'Yes. Peace to you and to the citizens of Nain. Also to you, people of Endor, peace and blessings. Go back to your homes. God has spoken to you through the miracle. Endeavour, through the power of love, to have all your hearts restored to Goodness.'

A last chorus of hosannas. Then the crowds let Jesus go, and He crosses the town and goes out into the country...

(In a dictation to Maria Valtorta, Jesus says:)

'Do not weep, parents left without children, spouses left without your consorts, orphans left without parents. Do not weep. As to the mother in the Gospel, I - who never lie - say to you, "Do not weep".

Believe in Me: ... I will give the being (that you love) back to you: in a kingdom where the sad death of earth has no access, and where the horrible death of the spirit is no longer possible. Do not weep. Upon all of you, may this hope - which is faith - descend with my blessing.'

(In another dictation, Jesus says:)

'...It is the breath of the Spirit of God that becomes a living spirit in man...

Open the Gospels. What do you think I restored life to the dead with? With my hand? With my voice? No. By infusing my breath, which, since it was God's, was vital - that is, spiritual. It was

a soul. I would bend over the dead, take their hand, and command, 'Get up.' Yes. But this was the external, visible form. As I bent over, I breathed the spirit, the outpouring of my spirit, upon their faces. And life returned...'