

MARIA VALTORTA READERS' GROUP - AUSTRALIA

TRANSCRIPTS OF PASSAGES FROM MARIA VALTORTA'S WRITINGS FOR

THE ROMAN RITE MASS

(Extracts from the five volumes of *The Poem of the Man-God* – from the 10-volume edition of *The Gospel as Revealed to Me*, from Maria's *Autobiography*, from her 1943, 1944 and 1945-50 *Notebooks*, and from *The Book of Azariah* (Maria's Guardian Angel), 1993 and 2007 Editions.

Copyright: All the passages contained herein remain the property of Centro Editoriale Valtortiano.

A COMPANION TO THE GOSPELS COVERING THE READINGS ON

- PALM SUNDAY
- HOLY WEEK,
- HOLY THURSDAY &
- GOOD FRIDAY

A COMPANION FILE TO PASSIONTIDE JESUS' PASSION AND DEATH

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PAGE	READINGS FOR PALM SUNDAY (or PASSION SUNDAY II) THE MASS AND HOLY WEEK, THE LAST SUPPER, GOOD FRIDAY
2	JESUS' PROPHECY OF HIS PASSION
2	JUDAS MEETS WITH THE SANHEDRIN
5	PREPARING FOR THE LAST SUPPER
6	THE INSTITUTION OF THE EUCHARIST <ul style="list-style-type: none">• JESUS FORESHADOWS JUDAS' BETRAYAL
7	JESUS FORESHADOWS PETER'S DENIAL
8	LEAVING FOR GETHSEMANE
8	THE AGONY IN THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE <ul style="list-style-type: none">• THE BETRAYAL BY JUDAS• THE ARREST
11	JESUS IS TAKEN BEFORE ANNAS
12	JESUS IS TAKEN BEFORE CAIAPHAS
14	THE FIRST ENCOUNTER OF JESUS WITH PONTIUS PILATE
16	JESUS IS TAKEN TO KING HEROD <ul style="list-style-type: none">• AND BACK TO PONTIUS PILATE
17	JESUS IS SCOURGED AT THE PILLAR
17	JESUS IS CROWNED WITH THORNS
18	THE TERROR AND DESPAIR OF JUDAS
19	THE TWO GREAT LOVES OF JESUS
20	THE STATIONS OF THE CROSS <ul style="list-style-type: none">• INTRODUCTION & THE FIRST STATION

21	THE FIRST STATION: Jesus Is Condemned
21	STATIONS 2-11
22	THE SECOND STATION: Jesus Carries His Cross
23	THE THIRD STATION: Jesus Falls The First Time
23	THE FOURTH STATION: Jesus Meets His Mother
23	THE FIFTH STATION: Simon From Cyrene Helps Jesus Carry His Cross
24	THE SIXTH STATION: Veronica Wipes The Face Of Jesus
24	THE SEVENTH STATION: Jesus Falls A Second Time
24	THE EIGHTH STATION: Jesus Consoles The Women Of Jerusalem
24	THE NINTH STATION: Jesus Falls A Third Time
24	THE TENTH STATION: Jesus Is Stripped Of His Garments
25	THE ELEVENTH STATION: Jesus Is Nailed To The Cross
26	THE TWELFTH STATION: Jesus Dies On The Cross There are two readings:
28	THE THIRTEENTH & FOURTEENTH STATIONS TOGETHER:
28	THE THIRTEENTH STATION: Jesus Is Taken Down From The Cross
29	THE FOURTEENTH STATION: Jesus Is Laid In The Sepulchre
30	JESUS TALKS TO US THROUGH MARIA VALTORTA- OF HIS PASSION

JESUS' PROPHECY OF HIS PASSION

[Mt. 20:17-19] [TRACK D 009](#)

As Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, he took the twelve apostles aside, and on the way he said to them, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man will be delivered to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn him to death, and deliver him to the Gentiles to be mocked and scourged and crucified, and he will be raised in the third day."

(Poem Vol. 5, p. 292-3; Gospel Vol. 9, p. 227-8)

(Shortly before the Feast of Passover, which will signal the beginning of His Passion, Jesus is reminded by His apostles that He had told them the Passover would be different this year. And He elaborates:)

« All the things foretold by the prophets concerning the Son of man will be fulfilled there. Truly: as the prophets foresaw; as it was already stated in the order given to the Hebrews in Egypt; and as Moses was ordered in the desert - the Lamb of God is about to be sacrificed, His Blood is about to mark the doorposts of hearts, and the angel of the Lord will pass without striking those who

have upon themselves - and with love - the Blood of the sacrificed Lamb. This Lamb is about to be raised on the cross bar, like the precious metal snake [of Moses], to be the sign for those wounded by the infernal snake, and to be salvation for those who look at it with love.

The Son of man, your Master Jesus, is about to be handed over to the chief priests, to the scribes and the elders, who will sentence Him to death and will deliver Him to the Gentiles to be sneered at. He will be smacked, beaten, spat at, dragged along the streets like a dirty rag. Then the Gentiles - after scourging and crowning Him with thorns - will condemn Him to die on the cross reserved for criminals, while the Jewish people are gathered in Jerusalem wanted His death in place of that of a robber. In this way, He will be put to death.

But, as it is mentioned in the signs of the prophecies, after three days He will rise again. That is the trial awaiting you. The one that will show you your spiritual advancement. I solemnly tell you, who think that you are so perfect as to despise those who do not belong to Israel, and to despise even many of our own people, I tell you solemnly that once the Shepherd has been captured, you - the chosen part of My flock - will be seized with fright, and will disperse, fleeing... as if the wolves - which will savage Me all over - were set on you. But, I tell you, be

not afraid. You will not be hurt in the least. I shall suffice to glut the wild wolves... »

The apostles, while Jesus is speaking, look like people under a shower of stones. They bend more and more as Jesus continues. And He ends, saying: « What I am telling you is about to happen. It is not like the other times, when there was time before the hour. The hour has now come. I am going, to be handed over to My enemies and sacrificed, for the salvation of everybody. And the bud of this flower here will not yet have lost its petals, after flowering, when I shall be already dead. »

Some of the apostles hide their faces in their hands, and some moan as if they had been wounded. Judas Iscariot is livid, absolutely livid...

JUDAS MEETS WITH THE MEMBERS OF THE SANHEDRIN

[Mt. 26:14-16] **TRACK D 010**

One of the Twelve, the man called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, "What are you prepared to give me if I hand him over to you?" They paid him thirty silver pieces, and from that moment he looked for an opportunity to betray him.

(Poem Vol. 5, pp. 379-86; Gospel, Vol. 9, pp. 336-44)

(Maria Valtorta writes:)

Judas arrives at country house of Caiaphas', the High Priest, at night. The moon illuminates the road for him.

He must be certain that he will find there, in that house outside the Jerusalem walls, those he is looking for, otherwise I think he would have tried to enter the town and he would have gone to the Temple. Instead, he is climbing among the olive-trees of the little hill - without a moment's hesitation. This time he is more certain than the previous time, because it is night-time, and the darkness and the late hour are a protection from every possible surprise. The country roads are now deserted, after being busy all day with the crowds of pilgrims going to Jerusalem for Passover. Even poor lepers are now in their caves...

Judas is now at the door of the house, which is all white in the moonlight. He knocks: three times, once, three times, then twice...

Even the conventional signal is familiar to him! And it must be a sure signal, because the door is half-opened without any check by the door-keeper through the peep-hole.

Judas steals in and asks the servant porter: « Have the members assembled? »

« Yes, Judas of Kerioth, they have. A full assembly, I might say. »

« Take me there. I have to speak of an important matter. Quick! »

The man locks the door with all the bolts, and leads him along a semi-dark vestibule, stopping in front of a heavy door, at which he knocks. A murmur of voices in the closed room stops, and is replaced by the noise of the lock and the squeaking of the door, which is opened,

and a cone of bright light is projected on the dark corridor.

« It's you? Come in! » says the person who opened the door and who is unknown to me. And Judas goes into the hall, while the man who opened the door locks it again.

There are signs of surprise - or at least of excitement - when Judas is seen to enter the room. But they greet him, all together: « Peace to you, Judas of Simon. »

« Peace to you, members of the holy Sanhedrin » greets Judas.

« Come forward. What do you want? » they ask him.

« I want to speak to you... of the Christ. It is not possible to go on like this. I can no longer be of any assistance to you, unless you make up your minds to take drastic measures. The man is suspicious by now. »

« Have you given yourself away, you fool? » they exclaim, interrupting him.

« No. But you are the fools, as you have made the wrong move by hurrying things in a stupid way. You knew very well that I would serve you! But you did not trust me. »

« You have a weak memory, Judas of Simon! Don't you remember how you parted from us the last time? Who could think that you were loyal to us, when you proclaimed in that way that you could not betray Him? » The ironical speaker is Helkai, who sounds more venomous than ever.

« And do you think that it is easy to get to deceive a friend, the Only One Who really loves me, the Innocent? Do you think it is easy to go so far as to commit a crime? » Judas is excited.

They try to calm him down. They coax him. And they allure him - or at least they try to do so - pointing out that he will not commit a crime « but it will be a holy deed: for his **Fatherland** - he will avoid reprisals from the rulers, who are already giving signs of intolerance because of the continual public commotions and divisions of parties and crowds in a Roman province; and for **Mankind**, if He is really convinced of the divine nature of the Messiah and of His spiritual mission. »

Another says: « If what He says is true - far be it from us to believe it - are you not the collaborator of Redemption? Your name will be associated to His for ever, and your Fatherland will number you with her valiant men, and will honour you with the highest dignities. A seat among us is ready for you. You will rise, Judas. You will lay down laws for Israel. Oh! We shall not forget what you have done: for the welfare of the holy Temple and of the holy Priesthood; for the protection of the most holy Law; and for the welfare of the whole Nation!

All you have to do is to help us, then we swear to you, I swear to you in the name of my powerful father and of Caiaphas - who is now wearing the ephod - you will be the greatest man in Israel. Greater than the tetrarchs, greater than my father, now a High Priest out of office. Like a king, like a prophet, you will be served and listened to. And if Jesus of Nazareth should be but a false Messiah, even if He really should not be liable to death because His deeds are not those of a robber, but of a

madman, we remind you of the inspired words of the pontiff Caiaphas. You know that he wears the ephod, and speaks through divine suggestion and prophesies what is good, and what is to be done. Caiaphas, do you remember? Caiaphas said: "It is better for one man to die for the people, than for the whole Nation to be destroyed". **It was a prophetic word.** »

« It was really a prophecy » echo, all together, the members of the great council of the Sanhedrin. « The Most High spoke through the lips of the High Priest. Let him be obeyed! » They already sound theatrical, and look like automatons who are to make certain gestures.

Judas is influenced, and allured... But there is still a little common sense, if not goodness, in him, and this restrains him from uttering the fatal words.

Surrounding him with respect and feigned affection, they urge him, saying: « Don't you believe us? Look: we are the heads of the twenty-four priestly families, the Elders of the people, the scribes, the greatest Pharisees in Israel, the wise rabbis, the magistrates of the Temple. The cream of Israel is here, around you, ready to acclaim you. And by one consent we say to you: "Do it, because it is a holy deed". »

Judas replies: « But where is Gamaliel? And Joseph, and Nicodemus, where are they? Where is Eleazar, Joseph's friend, and where is John of Gaash? I don't see them. »

« Gamaliel has secluded himself to do severe penance. John is with his pregnant wife who is poorly this evening. Eleazar... we do not know why he has not come. But anybody can be seized by a sudden illness, don't you think? With regard to Joseph and Nicodemus, we have not informed them of this secret meeting for your sake, and for the sake of your honour... so that, if our plan should unluckily fail, your name would not be reported to the Master... We are protecting your name. We love you, **Judas, the new Maccabee**, saviour of our Fatherland. »

« The Maccabee fought a good battle. I... am betraying. » says Judas.

« Do not consider the details of the action, but the justice of the purpose. Will you please speak: Sadoc, the golden scribe. Precious words flow from your lips. If Gamaliel is learned, you are wise, because the wisdom of God is on your lips. Speak to this man who still hesitates. »

Sadoc comes forward, followed by a decrepit Hananiah: an emaciated, dying fox, beside a shrewd strong cruel jackal.

« Listen, o man of God! » begins Sadoc pompously, assuming an inspired oratorical attitude, his right arm stretched forward in Ciceronian style, his left one engaged in holding up the heap of folds forming his scribe's garment. He then raises his left arm, allowing his monumental garment to spread out untidily, and with his face and arms raised towards the ceiling of the room, he says in a thundering voice: « I say unto you! I say unto you in the Most High Presence of God! »

« Maran Atha! » they all exclaim, stooping, as if a supreme inspiration bent them, then rising with their arms crossed on their chests.

« I say unto you. It is written in the pages of our history and of our fate! It is written in the signs and figures left by ages! It is written in the rite celebrated uninterruptedly since the night fatal to the Egyptians! It is written in the figure of Isaac! It is written in the figure of Abel! And let what is written come true. »

« Maran Atha! » say the others in a low mournful striking chorus, repeating the previous gestures, their faces oddly illuminated by the light of two chandeliers. This assembly of men - almost all dressed in white, with the pale or olive complexions of their race, made even more pale and olive by the diffused light - really looks like a gathering of ghosts.

« The word of God has descended upon the lips of the prophets to approve this decree. **He must die!** It is stated! »

« It is stated! Maran Atha! » is the reply.

« He must die, His destiny is marked! »

« He must die. Maran Atha! »

« His fatal destiny is described to the last detail, and fatality cannot be infringed! »

« Maran Atha! »

« Even the symbolic price to be paid - to him who becomes the instrument of God for the fulfilment of the promise - is indicated! »

« It is indicated! Maran Atha! »

« As Redeemer, or as false prophet, He must die! »

« He must die! Maran Atha! »

« The hour has come! Jehovah wants it! I can hear His voice! It is shouting: "Let it be accomplished"! »

« The Most High has spoken! Let it be accomplished! Let it be accomplished! Maran Atha! »

« Be the winner! »

« Be the winner! Maran Atha! »

The senile voice of Hananiah is heard: « He who hesitates over a sacred order is condemned to dishonour and death! »

« Is condemned. Maran Atha! »

« If you do not listen to the voice of the Lord your God, and you do not carry out His order and what He orders you through our words, may all maledictions fall upon you! »

« All the maledictions! Maran Atha! »

« May the Lord strike you with all the Mosaic curses and may He scatter you among the nations. »

« May He strike and scatter you! Maran Atha! »

Dead silence follows this impressive scene... Everything becomes motionless in frightening stillness.

At last Judas' voice is heard, and it is so changed, that I recognise it with difficulty: « Yes. I will do it. I must do it. And I will do it. The last part of the Mosaic curses is already my share, and I must get rid of it because I have already delayed too long. I am becoming mad, because I have no peace or respite. My heart is frightened, I look bewildered, and my soul is consumed by sadness. I tremble at the idea of being found out and crushed by Him for my double-crossing, because I do not know how

much He is aware of my thoughts. I see my life hanging by a thread, and morning and evening I implore to get this hour over with, because of the terror that frightens my heart. Because of the horrible task I must perform. Oh! bring this hour forward! Release me from my anguish! Let everything be done. At once! Now! That I may be freed! Let us go! »

Judas' voice has become firmer and stronger as he speaks. His gestures, previously automatic and insecure, like those of a sleepwalker, have become free and voluntary. He stands up in all his height, diabolically handsome, and shouts: « Let the ties of a foolish error fall! I am free from fearful subjection, Christ! I am no longer afraid of You and I am handing You to Your enemies! Let us go! »—A cry of a victorious demon, and he boldly goes towards the door.

But they stop him: « Wait! Tell us: where is Jesus of Nazareth? »

« In Lazarus' house. At Bethany. »

« We cannot enter that house, as it is well provided with faithful servants. It's the house of a favourite of Rome. We should certainly come up against much trouble. »

« Well, we are coming to town at dawn. Place guards on the Bethphage road, stir up a turmoil and capture Him. »

« How do you know that He will come along that road? He may take the other one... »

« No. He told His followers that He will go into town that way, by the Ephraim gate, and to wait for Him near En Rogel. If you capture Him before... »

(A debate ensues as to how best to capture Jesus without causing a riot. Then Judas is told:)

« Annas says: "It must not happen during the festivities, and there must be no disturbance among the fanatic people". That is what he ordered, and he gave orders that He should be treated with respect in the Temple and elsewhere, and that He should not be disturbed, in order to deceive Him. »

« So, what do you want to do? I was quite willing tonight, but you are hesitating... » says Judas.

« Well, you should take us to Him when He is all alone. You are aware of His habits. You wrote to us that He wants you to be closer to Him than anybody else. So you must know what He wants to do. We shall always be ready. When you think that it is the right place and the right moment, come, and we will follow you. »

(Coldly) « Agreed. And what retribution shall I receive? » Judas is now speaking coldly, as if he were dealing with common business.

« What is mentioned by the prophets, so that we may be faithful to the inspired word: thirty silver pieces... »

« Thirty silver pieces to kill a man, and that Man? The price of a common lamb during these festivities?! You are mad! It is not that I need money. I have plenty. So do not think that you can convince me for greed of money. It is too little to compensate, for my grief in betraying Him - Who has always loved me. »

« We have told you what we will do for you. Glory, honours! What you were hoping to have from Him, and

you did not get. We will cure your disappointment. But the price has been fixed by the prophets! Oh! it is a formality! A symbol and nothing else. The rest will follow later... »

« And the money - when? »

« The moment you say to us: "Come". Not before. No-one pays before taking possession of the goods. Don't you think that is fair? »

« It is fair. But at least treble the amount... »

Hananiah responds, chuckling: « No. That is what the prophets said. And that is what has to be done. Oh! we will obey the prophets! We will not omit an iota of what they wrote of Him. »...

« Everything has been said. You may go. We will await dawn to go back to town by different roads. Good-bye. Peace be with you, lost sheep, who are returning to Abraham's flock. Peace to you! Peace to you! And the gratitude of the whole of Israel! Rely on us! A desire of yours is a law to us. May God be with you, as He was with all His more faithful servants! All the blessings on you! »

They take him to the door with embraces and affirmations of love... they watch him go away along the half-dark corridor... they listen to the noise of the locks of the door that is opened and closed...

They go back to the hall exulting.

(A discussion follows as to what to do with Judas after the event. Some are worried that he might betray his hirers. Then comes the reply:)

« It has already been decided what we will do to Judas. It was decided the last time. Don't you remember? And we will not change our minds. After everything is finished with the Christ, Judas shall die. That is settled. »

« But if he should speak before? »

« To whom? To the disciples and to the people, to be stoned? He will not speak. The horror of his deed will gag him... »

« But he may repent in future, he may feel remorse, he may even become mad... Because his remorse, if it should awaken, could only drive him mad... »

And Helkai replies, in a dreadful tone: « He will not have time. We will see to that before. Everything at the right moment. The Nazarene first, then the man who betrayed Him. »

PREPARING FOR THE LAST SUPPER

[Mt. 26:17-19] **TRACK D 011**

On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the disciples approached Jesus and said, 'Where do you want us to prepare for you to eat the Passover?' He said, 'Go into the city to a certain man and tell him: the teacher says, "My appointed time draws near; in your house I shall celebrate the Passover with my disciples." ' The disciples then did as Jesus had ordered, and prepared the Passover.

(Poem Vol. 5, pp. 476-8; Gospel Vol. 9, pp. 457-9)

(It is now Holy Thursday. Jesus - with His apostles and many of His disciples - have been in Jerusalem since the previous Sunday. As is customary, they have camped in the Field of the Galileans, on the Mount of Olives and close to Gethsemane. It is early morning, and Jesus and His apostles are walking towards Jerusalem...)

When they are almost at Gethsemane, the apostles ask Jesus: « Where shall we go to consume the Passover? Which place are You choosing? Tell us and we will go and prepare everything. »

And Judas of Kerioth says: « Give me Your orders and I'll go. »

But Jesus says: « Peter and John. Go ahead and enter the town by the Dung Gate. As soon as you go in, you will meet a man who is coming back from En Rogel with a pitcher of that good water. Follow him until he goes into a house. You will say to the person in the house: "The Master says: "Where is the room where I may eat the Passover with My disciples?". He will show you a large supper-room. Prepare everything there. Go quickly, and then join us at the Temple. »

The two go away in a hurry. Jesus, instead, proceeds slowly. The morning is still cool, and only the first pilgrims have appeared on the roads leading into town. They cross the little Kidron bridge before Gethsemane, and enter the town. The gates are no longer watched by legionaries, probably because of a counter-order by Pilate, who has been reassured about the lack of disputes concerning Jesus. There is, in fact, absolute tranquility, everywhere.

Oh! no one can deny that the Judaeans have been able to control themselves! No one has molested the Master or His disciples. Behaving respectfully - if not affectionately, and as well-mannered people - they have always greeted Him, even the most rancorous members of the Sanhedrin.

Just now a large group of Pharisees and scribes passes by, coming from Caiaphas' country house, which is close to the gate. Among them is the son of Annas, with Helkai and Sadoc. And bending their backs covered with wide mantles they pay their respects among the fluttering of garments, fringes and bulky headgear. Jesus greets them and passes by, regal in His red woollen tunic and His mantle of a darker shade, with the sun turning His coppery hair into a golden wreath, and a shining veil reaching down to His shoulders.

Judas of Kerioth, who was always looking around, moves to the roadside under the pretext of tying his sandal, and - I can see him very well - he beckons to those men to wait for him... He lets Jesus and His disciples go ahead, always busy at the buckle of his sandal to strike an attitude; he then passes quickly close to the scribes and Pharisees and whispers: « Meet me at the Beautiful Gate. About the sixth hour. One of you » and he darts away quickly, joining his companions...

They go up to the Temple. There are only few Jews as yet, but many Gentiles. Jesus goes to worship the Lord. He then comes back and He tells Simon and Bar-

tholomew to buy the lamb, getting the money from Judas of Kerioth.

« I could have done it! » says Judas.

« You will have other things to do. You know that. There is that widow to whom the offering of Mary of Lazarus is to be taken, telling her that after the festivities she should go to Bethany, to Lazarus' house. Do you know where she lives? Have you understood? »

« Yes, I know! When have I to go? »

« Later. I shall not stop long here. I will rest today, as I want to be fit for this evening, and for My night prayer. »

« All right. »

(Maria Valtorta comments:)

Well, I wonder: In the past days, Jesus has said nothing about His intentions, so as not to let Judas have any details. Why does He now say what He will do during the night? Has His Passion already begun with the blindness of foresight, or has this foresight increased so much that He can read in the books of Heaven that this is « the night » and that therefore it is necessary to make it known to him who is waiting to know, so that he may hand Him over to His enemies. Or has He always known that His immolation is to begin this night? I cannot give any answer. Jesus does not give me any reply. And I remain with my queries, while I watch Jesus, Who is curing the last sick people. The last ones... Tomorrow, in a few hours, He will no longer be able...

THE EUCHARIST, AND THE BETRAYAL

[Mt. 26:20-29] **TRACK D 012**

When it was evening, he reclined at table with the Twelve. And while they were eating, he said, 'Amen, I say to you, one of you will betray me.' Deeply distressed at this, they began to say to him one after another, 'Surely it is not I, Lord!' He said in reply, 'He who has dipped his hand into the dish with me is the one who will betray me. The Son of Man indeed goes, as is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed. It would be better for that man if he had never been born. Then Judas, his betrayer, said in reply, 'Surely it is not I, Rabbi?' He answered, 'You have said so.' While they were eating, Jesus took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and giving it to his disciples, said, 'Take and eat, this is my body.' Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which will be shed on behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, from now on I shall not drink this fruit of the vine until the day when I drink it with you, new, in the kingdom of my Father.'

(Poem Vol. 5, pp. 504-7; Gospel Vol. 9, pp. 492-6)

(Jesus and His apostles have assembled in the Supper Room, and have completed the traditional Passover Feast. Maria Valtorta's account of this passage describes the Institution of the Eucharist before

Jesus' announcement of a betrayal. Sitting down, Jesus says:)

« Now that the old rite has been accomplished, I will celebrate the new one. I have promised you a miracle of love. It is time to work it. That is why I have longed for this Passover. From now on this is the Victim that will be consumed in a perpetual rite of love.

My beloved friends, I have loved you throughout the whole life of the Earth. I have loved you for all eternity, My children. And I want to love you till the end. There is nothing greater than this. **Bear that in mind.** I am going away. But we shall remain for ever united, through the miracle that I will now work. »

Jesus takes a loaf which is still unbroken, and places it on the chalice that has been filled with wine. He blesses and offers both. He then breaks the bread into thirteen morsels, and gives one to each apostle, saying: « Take this and eat it. This is My Body. Do this in remembrance of Me, Who am going away. » He gives the chalice and says: « Take this and drink it. This is My Blood. This is the chalice of the new alliance - in My Blood and through My Blood - that will be shed for you, to remit your sins and give you the Life. Do this in remembrance of Me. »

Jesus is very sad. There is no smile, no trace of light, no colour on His face. It is already an agonizing face. The apostles look at Him, utterly anguished.

Jesus then stands up, saying: « Do not move. I shall be back at once. »

He takes the thirteenth morsel of bread and the chalice, and He goes out of the Supper-room.

« He is going to His Mother » whispers John.

And Judas Thaddeus sighs: « Poor woman! »

Peter asks in a very low voice: « Do you think She knows? »

« She knows everything. She has always been aware of everything » is the reply.

They all speak in very low voices, as if they were in front of a corpse.

« But do you think that really... » begins Thomas, who does not yet want to believe.

« And do you doubt it? It is His hour » replies James of Zebedee.

« May God grant us strength to be faithful » says Simon the Zealot.

Peter is about to speak, but John, who is on the lookout, says: « Silence! He is here. »

Jesus comes back in. He has the empty chalice in His hands. Only at its bottom there is a trace of wine, and in the light of the chandelier it looks just like blood.

Judas Iscariot, in front of whom is the chalice, looks at it as if he were enchanted, then he averts his eyes. Jesus watches him and shudders, and John, leaning on His chest, feels it. « Why not say so! You are shivering... » he [quietly] exclaims.

« No. I am not shivering because I am feverish... I have told you everything, and I have given you everything. I could not have given you anything else. I have given you Myself. »

He makes His usual kind gesture with His hands, which, previously joined, now separate and stretch out,

while He bows His head as if He wished to say: « Excuse Me if I cannot give you any more. It is so. »

He then speaks out: « I have told you everything, and I have given you everything. And I repeat. The new rite has been accomplished. Do this in remembrance of Me.

I have washed your feet to teach you to be humble and pure like your Master. Because I solemnly tell you that disciples must be like their Master. Remember that, bear it in mind. And when you are in high office, remember that. There is no disciple greater than his Master. As I washed you, do the same to one another. That is, love one another like brothers, helping and respecting one another, setting an example to one another.

Be pure, to be worthy of eating the living Bread that descended from Heaven. And have the strength, in yourselves and through It, to be My disciples in the hostile world that will hate you because of My Name. But one of you is not pure. **One of you will betray Me.** My Spirit is deeply perturbed by that... The hand of him who will betray Me is here, with Me, on this table, and neither My love, nor My Body and Blood, nor My word, make him mend his ways and repent. I would **forgive** him, going to My death, on his behalf also. »

The disciples cast terrified glances at one another. They scrutinise one another suspiciously. Peter stares at the Iscariot in a revival of all his doubts. Judas Thaddeus in his turn jumps to his feet to look at the Iscariot over Matthew's body.

But the Iscariot is so sure of himself! In his turn, he looks at Matthew, as if he suspected him. He then looks fixedly at Jesus, and smiling, he asks: « Is it I perhaps? » He seems to be the one who is most certain of his honesty, and did not want to let the conversation drop.

Jesus repeats His gesture saying: « You are saying so, Judas of Simon, not I. You are saying so. I have not mentioned your name. Why are you accusing yourself? - Ask your internal warning, your conscience of a man, the conscience that God the Father gave you that you might behave as a man, and listen whether it accuses you. You will be the first to know. But if it reassures you, why do you utter a word and speak of a deed that is anathema even to mention or to think of as a joke? »

Jesus is speaking calmly. He seems to be supporting a proposed thesis as a learned man may do with his pupils. The confusion is great, but Jesus' calm quietens it.

Peter is the most suspicious of Judas. (Perhaps Thaddeus is also, but he does not look suspicious, disarmed as he is by the Iscariot's easy manners.) Peter plucks John's sleeve, and when John, who has pressed against Jesus upon hearing Him speak of betrayal, turns round, he whispers to him: « Ask Him who it is. »

John takes his previous position again, he raises his head slightly, as if he wanted to kiss Jesus, and in the meantime he whispers in His ear: « Master, who is it? »

And Jesus in a very low voice, kissing him, in His turn, on his head, says: « It is he to whom I shall give a piece of bread dipped in the dish. »

And taking another whole loaf - not the remains of the one used for the Eucharist - He breaks off a large morsel,

dips it into the lamb's sauce left in the tray, and says: « Take it, Judas. You like this. »

« Thank You, Master. I do like it » and unaware of what that morsel is, he eats it, while John, horrified, closes his eyes, so as not to see the horrid smile of the Iscariot, as he bites the accusing bread with his strong teeth.

« Well. Now that I have made you happy, go » Jesus says to Judas. « Everything **here** has been accomplished, (He lays much stress on that word). What is still left to be done elsewhere, do it quickly, Judas of Simon. »

« I will obey You at once, Master. Then I will join You at Gethsemane. You are going there, are You not? As usual? »

« Yes... I am going there... as usual. »

« What has he got to do? » asks Peter. « Is he going by himself? »

« I am not a baby » says Judas scoffingly, as he puts on his mantle.

« Let him go » says Jesus. « He and I know what must be done ».

« Yes, Master. » Peter is silent. Perhaps he thinks he has committed a sin, suspecting his companion. Resting his forehead on the palm of his hand, he becomes pensive.

Jesus presses John to His heart and whispers again through his hair: « Say nothing to Peter for the time being. It would be a useless scandal. »

« Goodbye, Master. Goodbye, friends » says Judas.

« Goodbye » replies Jesus.

And Peter says: « Goodbye, boy. »

John, his head almost on Jesus' lap, whispers: « Satan! » Jesus alone hears him, and sighs...

JESUS FORESHADOWS PETER'S DENIAL

[Mt. 26:31-35] **TRACK D 013**

Then Jesus said to them, 'This night all of you will have your faith in me shaken, for it is written: "I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be dispersed". But after I have been raised up, I shall go before you to Galilee.' Peter said to him in reply, 'Though all may have their faith in you shaken, mine shall never be.' Jesus said to him, 'Amen, I say to you, this very night before the cock crows, you will deny me three times.' Peter said to him, 'Even though I should have to die with you, I will not deny you.' And all the disciples spoke likewise.

(Poem Vol. 5, pp. 509-10; Gospel Vol. 9, pp. 499-500)

(After Judas has gone, Jesus gives instructions to the apostles, saying how difficult it will be for them once He is gone, pointing out how important His Mother is in the plan of Redemption, and reminding them to love one another - as He has loved them...)

« ...If you love one another after I have left you, everybody will acknowledge you as My children, therefore as My disciples, and as brothers to one another, having had only one father. »

« Lord, but where are You going? » asks Peter.

« I am going where at present you cannot follow Me. But you will follow Me later. »

« And why not now? I have always followed You since You said to me: "Follow Me". I left everything without regret... Now, to go away without Your poor Simon, leaving me without You, Who are everything to me - after I left the little property I had previously, for Your sake - is not fair or nice of You. Are You going to Your death? All right. I will come as well. We shall go to the next world together. But I will have defended You before that. I am ready to give my life for You. »

« You'll give your life for Me? Now? Not now. I solemnly - oh! I do solemnly tell you - before the cock crows, you will have disowned Me three times. This is the first watch. Then the second will come... and then the third. Before the cock crows loudly, you will have disowned your Lord three times. »

« Impossible, Master! I believe everything You say, but not that. I am sure of myself. »

« Now, at present, you are sure. Because you still have Me. You have God with you. Before long, the Incarnate God will be caught, and you will no longer have Him. And Satan, after making you heavy - your very certainty is a trick of Satan, and is ballast to weigh you down - he will frighten you. He will insinuate to you: "God does not exist. I do". And as you will still be able to reason - although dull with fear - you will understand that, when Satan is the master of the hour, Good is dead, and Evil is active. The spirit is dejected, and the human is triumphant. You will then be like warriors without a leader, chased by the enemy. In the dismay of being defeated you will bow your necks to the conqueror. And in order not to be killed, you will disown the fallen hero.

But please, do not let your hearts be upset. Believe in God. And believe also in Me. Believe in Me, against all appearances. Let he who remains, and he who runs away, believe in My mercy and in the Father's. Both he who is silent and he who moves his lips to say: "I do not know Him". And likewise believe in My forgiveness. Believe that whatever your actions may be in future - in Good, and in My Doctrine, consequently in My Church - they will give you equal places in Heaven. In the house of My Father there are many abodes. If it were not so, I would have told you. Because I am going ahead, to prepare a place for you... I will come again and take you with Me so that you may be where I am, where there is no death or mourning, no tears, no shouting, no hunger, no pain, no darkness, no parching thirst, but only light, peace, happiness and singing. Oh! song of the Highest Heavens when the twelve chosen ones will sit on thrones with the twelve patriarchs of the tribes of Israel and in the ardour of the fire of spiritual love, standing upright over the sea of beatitude, they will sing the eternal song accompanied by the arpeggio of the eternal alleluia of the angelical host... »

LEAVING FOR GETHSEMANE

[Mt. 26:30,36a] **TRACK D 014**

Then, after singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. Then Jesus came with them to Gethsemane.

(Poem Vol. 5, p. 517; Gospel Vol. 9, pp. 508-9)

(It is now time for Jesus and His apostles to leave the Supper Room...)

Jesus stands up, He opens His arms out crosswise and with His face shining brightly He says the sublime prayer to the Father. John quotes it integrally.

The apostles are shedding tears more or less openly and noisily. As a last thing, they sing a hymn.

Jesus blesses them. He then says to them: « Let us put on our mantles now. And let us go. Andrew, tell the owner of the house to leave everything as it is, as I want that. Tomorrow... you will be pleased see this place again. » Jesus looks at it. He seems to be blessing walls, furniture, everything. He then puts on His mantle and goes out, followed by the disciples. Beside Him is John, on whom He leans.

« Are you not saying goodbye to Your Mother? » Zebedee's son asks Him.

« No. Everything has already been done. Furthermore, make no noise. »

Simon the Zealot, who has lit a torch at the chandelier, illuminates the wide corridor that leads to the door. Peter opens the main door cautiously, and they all go out into the street, and then, working a gadget, they close the door from outside. And they start off...

THE AGONY IN THE GARDEN

[Mt. 26:36-56] **TRACK D 015**

Then Jesus came with them to a small estate called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, 'Stay here while I go over there to pray.' He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee with him. And sadness came over him, and great distress. Then he said to them, 'My soul is sorrowful to the point of death. Wait here and keep awake with me.' And going on a little further he fell on his face and prayed. 'My Father,' he said, 'if it is possible, let this cup pass me by. Nevertheless, let it be as you, not I, would have it.' He came back to the disciples and found them sleeping, and he said to Peter, 'So you had not the strength to keep awake with me one hour. You should be awake, and praying not to be put to the test. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.' Again a second time, he went away and prayed: 'My Father,' he said 'if this cup cannot pass by without me drinking it, your will be done!' And he came back and found them sleeping, their eyes were so heavy. Leaving them there, he went away again and prayed for the third time, repeating the same words. Then he came back to the disciples and said to them, 'You can sleep on now and take your rest. Now the hour has come when the Son of Man is to be betrayed into the hands of sinners. Get up! Let us go! My betrayer is already close at hand.' He was still speaking when Judas, one of the Twelve, appeared, and with him a large number of men armed

with swords and clubs, sent by the chief priests and elders of the people. Now the traitor had arranged a sign with them. 'The one I kiss,' he had said 'he is the man. Take him in charge.' So he went straight up to Jesus and said, 'Greetings, Rabbi,' and kissed him. Jesus said to him, 'My friend, do what you are here for.' Then they came forward, seized Jesus and took him in charge. At that, one of the followers of Jesus grasped his sword and drew it; he struck out at the high priest's servant and cut off his ear. Jesus then said, 'Put your sword back, for all who draw the sword will die by the sword. Or do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father who would promptly send more than twelve legions of angels to my defence? But then, how would the scriptures be fulfilled that say this is the way it must be?' It was at this time that Jesus said to the crowds, 'Am I a brigand, that you had to set out to capture me with swords and clubs? I sat teaching in the Temple day after day and you never laid hands on me.' Now all this happened to fulfil the prophecies in scripture. Then all the disciples deserted him and ran away.

(Poem Vol. 5, pp. 530-39; Gospel Vol. 10, pp. 23-35)

(Jesus and His apostles, with the exception of Judas, have left the house of the Last Supper, and arrive at a place below the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus says:)

« Let us part now. I am going further up, to pray. I want Peter, John and James with Me. You others, remain here. And if you should be overwhelmed, call us. And be not afraid. Not a single hair of your heads will be hurt. Pray for Me. Lay aside hatred and fear. It will only be a moment... then it will be full joy... And once again, thank you for everything, My friends. Goodbye. May the Lord not abandon you... »

Jesus parts from the apostles and goes ahead, while Simon the Zealot gives Peter the torch. (Peter, James and John then follow Jesus)... It grieves me to see Judas Thaddeus cast such an intense and sorrowful glance at Jesus, that the Latter turns round to see who has been looking at Him. But Thaddeus hides behind Bartholomew, biting his lips to control himself.

With His hand, Jesus makes a gesture, which is of blessing and farewell at the same time... They go on until they reach the edge of the first escarpment of the rustic amphitheatre of the olive-grove... Jesus then says: « Stop, wait for Me here, while I pray. But do not fall asleep. I may need you. And I ask you this out of charity, pray! Your Master is very depressed. »

He is in fact already in a state of deep depression... His voice is tired and exhausted.

Peter replies on behalf of everybody: « Do not worry, Master. We will keep awake and pray. All You have to do is to call us, and we will come. »

Jesus leaves the three apostles, while they stoop to gather leaves and twigs, and light a little fire to keep themselves awake...

Jesus walks eastwards, so that the moon shines on His face. I see that a deep sorrow dilates His eyes... He

climbs with His head lowered, and only now and again He raises it with a sigh... He then casts His eyes, that are so sad, around the peaceful olive-grove. He climbs up a few metres, and then goes round an escarpment...

He stops there... and prays with His arms stretched out crosswise, His face towards the sky... It is a prayer rising from His love, and His need. A true conversation with His Father. « ... I ask You to have mercy on them... Will I save them? That is what I ask of You. This I want: that they be saved from the world, from the flesh, from the demon... »

He turns round, leans with His back against the rock, folds His arms, and looks at Jerusalem. His face becomes sadder and sadder, and He whispers: « She looks like snow... and she is all sin. And how many I cured in her! How much I spoke!... Where are those who seemed loyal to Me? »

He lowers His head and looks fixedly at the ground... I understand that He is weeping, because some tears shine when falling from His face on the ground. He then raises His head, unfolds His arms, and joins them - holding them above His head...

He then... goes back towards the three apostles, who are sitting round the little fire of twigs. And He finds them half asleep...

« Have you not been able to keep awake for one hour? I need your comfort and your prayers so much! »

The three wake up with a start, and are utterly confused: « ... It's the wine... the food... It was only a moment... But we will now pray in loud voices, and it will not happen again. »

« Yes. Pray and be on the alert. For your own sake as well. »

Jesus... goes back to His rock more slowly, and more stooped. He kneels, resting His arms on the rock... Shortly afterwards He feels the coolness of the little corollas growing there, and raises His head. He looks at them, caresses them, and speaks to them: « You are here as well!... You comfort Me! These little flowers were also in My Mother's little grotto... My Mother! Oh! My Mother! » He bursts into tears. His head on His joined hands, and a little reclined on His heels: « ... I brought them to You, Mother. But... who will bring them to You now?... »

He resumes praying and meditating. Then He stands up, and He goes backwards and forwards, whispering words that I do not grasp... To describe it is impossible. To see it is to share His anguish. He makes gestures towards Jerusalem. Then He begins to raise His arms again towards the sky, as if He wanted to invoke help...

His anguish is such that, in order to overcome it, He shouts the names of Peter and John. And He says: « They will come now. They are really loyal! » But "they" do not come...

He runs fast towards the place where Peter and the two brothers are. And He finds them comfortably fast asleep around a few embers... « Peter! I have called you three times!... Are you still sleeping? Do you not realise how much I am suffering? Pray. That the flesh may not win, that it may not overwhelm you. *Not any of you.* If the spirit is willing, the flesh is weak. Help Me... »

The three wake up more slowly... and with dull eyes they apologise, and re-ignite the fire... lighting up the poor face of Jesus. It is a face that is so sad, that one cannot look at it without weeping... He says: « I feel an anguish that is killing Me! Oh! yes! My soul is sad even unto death. My friends!... My friends! »... Every word sounds like a sob...

But the three are too heavy with sleep... Jesus looks at them... He does not humiliate them by reproaching them. He shakes His head, sighs, and goes back to the place where He was.

He prays once again, standing, with His arms stretched out crosswise. Then on His knees... He calls His Father.

« ... This cup is too bitter! I cannot! I cannot! It is above My power. I have been able to bear everything! But not this... Father, take it away from Your Son! Have mercy on Me!... What have I done to deserve it? » He then collects Himself and says: « But, Father, do not listen to My voice, if what I ask is against Your will. Do not remember that I am Your Son, but only Your servant. Let Your will be done, not Mine. »

He remains like this for some time. Then He utters a stifled cry... He drops on the ground, with His face on the earth... A worn-out man, overburdened by all the sins of the world...

Jesus moans, having the death-rattle in His throat, and sobbing like one in agony: « Nothing!... Nothing!... Away!... The will of My Father! His will! Only His will!... Your will, Father. Yours, not Mine... In vain you tempt Me, devil, through My Mother, My life, My divinity and My mission... "Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass Me by. But let Your will be done, not Mine". Be off, Satan. I belong to God. »

Then He speaks no more, except to say, in a panting voice: « God! God! God! » He calls Him at each heartbeat, and at each beat, blood seems to flow out of Him. The cloth on His shoulders gets soaked through, and becomes dark, notwithstanding the clear moonlight that illuminates it completely.

A brighter light appears above His head, hanging about a metre above Him. It is so bright that even the Prostrate Master can see it filter through His wavy hair, already weighed down by blood... As He raises His head... the angelic light shines more brightly... Then all the dreadful agony appears, in the blood seeping out from His pores... Blood trickles from His temples, blood spouts from the veins of His neck, His hands drip blood. And when He stretches His hands towards the angelic light... Christ's forearms can be seen sweating blood. Only His tears draw two neat lines in the red mask of His face...

Jesus seems on the point of fainting. He unties the neck of His tunic... He takes His hand to His heart and then to His head, and with His mouth half open, He waves it in front of His face, as if He wanted to fan Himself. He drags Himself towards the rock... and leans with His back against it. His arms are hanging along His body, as if He were already dead. His head is bent over His chest...

The angelic light slowly fades away... Jesus reopens His eyes. He raises His head with difficulty, and looks around. He is alone. But He is less anguished... He takes a large leaf... which is all wet with dew - and He cleans Himself with it, wetting His face and hands, and then drying Himself. He does the same several times with other leaves, until He wipes out the traces of His dreadful sweat. Only His tunic is stained... He folds it and lays it on the rock...

Then He stands up, and still staggering a little, He goes to the disciples. His face is... full of divine beauty, although it is deadly pale...

The three are sleeping soundly... Jesus calls them in vain. He has to bend and shake them vigorously...

« Get up, now, and let us go. He who is going to betray Me is close at hand. »

The three, still drowsy, get up. They... follow Jesus without speaking.

The other eight are also more or less asleep around a fire that has gone out. « Get up! » orders Jesus in a thunderous voice. « As Satan is arriving, show him, who never sleeps, and his children, that the children of God are not asleep! »...

The guards, headed by Judas, burst into the little square, with their many torches... It is a horde of bandits disguised as soldiers, who... grin like devils...

All the apostles jump to one corner... Jesus remains where He is.

Judas approaches Jesus... and kisses His right cheek.

In a sorrowful tone, Jesus says: « My friend, what have you come for? Are you betraying Me with a kiss? »

Judas bends his head for a moment, then raises it... He is insensible... to every invitation to repent.

The guards, shouting, come forward with ropes and clubs...

« Who are you looking for? » asks Jesus calmly and solemnly.

« Jesus the Nazarene. »

« I am He. » His voice is thunderous... They all fall to the ground... except Judas, Jesus and the apostles, who take fresh heart again... so much so that they threaten Judas so explicitly, that the latter takes a leap, just in time to avoid a stroke from Simon's sword.... Pursued by stones and sticks... he escapes beyond the Kidron, and disappears in a dark lane.

Then Jesus says: « Stand up. Who are you looking for? I ask you once again. »

« Jesus the Nazarene. »

« I have told you that I am He » says Jesus kindly. Yes, *kindly*. « So, let these others go. I will come. Put away your swords and clubs... »

But while He is speaking, Peter approaches the man who is holding out the ropes to tie Jesus, gives him a clumsy blow with his sword, and cuts off part of his ear... There is chaos, until Jesus says: « Put those weapons away. I order you to do that. If I wanted, I could have the angels of My Father to defend Me. And you, be cured. In your soul first of all, if you can. » And before stretching

out His hands to be tied, He touches the ear, and cures it.

The apostles shout very unbecomingly... (and) run away.

Jesus and the guards are left all alone. And His new journey begins...

JESUS IS TAKEN BEFORE ANNAS, THE FATHER-IN-LAW OF THE HIGH PRIEST

[Jn. 18:12-16,19-23] **TRACK D 016**

The cohort and its captain and the Jewish guards seized Jesus and bound him. They took him first to Annas, because Annas was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year. It was Caiaphas who suggested to the Jews, 'It is better for one man to die for the people.' Simon Peter, with another disciple, followed Jesus. This disciple, who was known to the high priest, went with Jesus into the high priest's palace, but Peter stayed outside the door. So the other disciple, the one known to the high priest, went out, spoke to the woman who was keeping the door and brought Peter in...

The high priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and his teaching. Jesus answered, 'I have spoken openly for all the world to hear; I have always taught in the synagogue and in the Temple where all the Jews meet together: I have said nothing in secret. But why ask me? Ask my hearers what I taught: they know what I said.' At these words one of the guards standing by gave Jesus a slap in the face, saying, 'Is that the way to answer the high priest?' Jesus replied, 'If there is something wrong in what I said, point it out; but id there is no offence in it, why did you strike me?'

(Poem Vol. 5, pp. 545-51; Gospel Vol. 10, pp. 43-50)

(Jesus has been betrayed by Judas and arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane. He orders His apostles to put away their weapons, and they run away and leave him with the guards. Maria Valtorta writes...)

The painful journey begins along the stony lane leading from the clearing - where Jesus was arrested - to the Kidron watercourse, then along another lane, into town. The jeering and torture begin at once.

Jesus' wrists and even His waist are tied as if He were a dangerous madman. The ends of the ropes are entrusted to men who are intoxicated with hatred, and Jesus is tugged here and there like a rag...

As He crosses the little bridge on the Kidron, a violent jerk causes Him to fall heavily against the creek's parapet. Jesus' bruised mouth is bleeding, and He raises His tied hands to wipe away the blood from His beard. But He doesn't say anything - He is really the lamb that doesn't bite its torturer...

In the meantime, some people have gone to get pebbles and stones, and from the gravel-bed below, a shower of stones strikes the easy target... And handfuls of

filthy stuff are flung at Him, going into His mouth and eyes...

The procession begins to go through the suburb of Ophel, in which He dispensed so much good and so many caresses. The shouts of the crowd awaken the people who rush to their doors. And while women utter cries of sorrow and run away (struck with terror at seeing what is happening), some of the men.. either lower their heads... or they follow the procession...

Before arriving at the walls, the Gates have already been opened. Fully armed Roman soldiers are there... ready to interfere should the prestige of Rome be threatened.

And there is John with Peter. I think they must have arrived by a short cut... The two apostles are in the half-light of an entrance-hall, near a little square before the walls. They have covered their heads with their mantles to conceal their faces. But when Jesus arrives, John drops his mantle and shows his pale and upset face... Peter doesn't dare to show his face, but he comes forward to be seen by Jesus.

Jesus looks at them... and He smiles with infinite kindness. Peter turns around and goes back to his dark corner, covering his eyes with his hands, stooping, aged, already in very poor spirits. John remains bravely where he is, and only when the howling crowd has gone by, he joins Peter, takes him by the elbow, and guides him as if he were a boy leading his blind father.

They both enter the town behind the clamouring crowd, [where] I can hear a mixture of scornful and sorrowful exclamations of the Roman soldiers...

The house of Annas is at the Temple's extremities, near a series of massive walls, which seem to be the boundaries of the town. From here, the walls stretch along the side of the mountain, enclosing porches and yards, until they reach the enclosure of the Temple proper.

There is a tall iron door in the wall... They open it wide, so that the bawling crowd - with the Prisoner in the middle of them - may go in. They then close and bolt the door...

They go along the entrance hall, and then pass through a wide yard, a corridor, another porch and another yard. They then drag Jesus up three steps... arriving at a richly furnished hall, where there is an elderly man wearing the robes of a priest.

« May God comfort you, Annas » says one who seems to be the officer... »

« May God bless you for your prudence and your faith. »...

[Then Annas asks Jesus:] « Who are You? »

« Jesus of Nazareth, the Rabbi, the Christ. And you know Me. I have not acted in darkness. »

« No, not in darkness. But You have led the crowds astray with obscure doctrines. It is the Temple's right and duty to protect the souls of the children of Abraham. »

« The souls! Priest of Israel: can you say that you have suffered for the soul of either the least or greatest of these people? »

« And what about You? What have You done that may be called suffering? »

« What have I done? Why do you ask Me? The whole of Israel speaks about Me... »

I have given sight to blind people: the sight of their eyes, and of their hearts. I have opened the ears of deaf people: to the voices of the Earth and of Heaven. I have made cripples and paralytics walk, so that they might begin marching from the flesh towards God, and then proceed with their spirits. I have cleansed lepers of the leprosy pointed out by the Mosaic Law, and of the leprosy which makes man polluted in the eyes of God: **sin**. I have raised the dead... I have helped the poor... And remaining poor myself... I have wiped more tears by Myself than all of you, who possess riches. And finally, I have given a wealth that has no name: the knowledge of the Law, the knowledge of God... That is what I have done. Nothing else. »

Then Annas says: « Do You realise that You are accusing Yourself?... You are insulting Moses, and insinuating that there are some gaps in **his Law**... And do You dare say that You can forgive sins? How can You do that? »

« If with a little lustral water and the sacrifice of a ram it is lawful and credible to cancel, expiate, and be cleansed of a sin, why will My tears, My Blood and My will not be able to do so? »

« But You are not dead. So where is the Blood? »

« I am not dead yet. But I shall be, because **it is written**:... in the Book that contains the voices of the prophets...; and it is written in hearts - in yours, in the heart of Caiaphas, in the hearts of the members of the Sanhedrin - who do not, no, they do **not forgive** Me for being good. I have absolved in anticipation, through My Blood. I will now accomplish absolution with its purifying bath... »

Why are you killing Me? Because you are afraid that I may dethrone you. Oh! be not afraid. My Kingdom is not of this world. I leave you to be the masters of all power. And the Eternal knows when to say "Enough" which will make You drop, thunder-struck... »

« How **dare** You? »

« I am the Truth. And the Truth is never cowardly. »

« You are proud and foolish! »

« No » replies Jesus. « Sincere. You accuse Me of offending you. But don't you all **hate**? You hate one another. And now you are united by your hatred for Me. But tomorrow, when you have killed Me, you will hate one another once again, and more fiercely... »

Of what do you accuse **Me**? »

« Of preaching a new doctrine. »

« O priest! Israel is swarming with new doctrines: the Essenes have theirs, the Sadochites and the Pharisees have theirs; everybody has his secret doctrine: for one it is named pleasure; for another one, it is gold; for another, it is power. »

Everybody has his idol. **Not I**. I have resumed the down-trodden Law of My Father, of the Eternal God, and I have gone back to repeating the ten commandments of the Decalogue in a simple way, talking Myself hoarse, to

make these commandments enter the hearts that no longer knew them. »

« Horror! Blasphemy! How dare You say this to **me**, a **priest**? Has Israel no Temple?... »

« There is a Temple. Yes. A building. But God is not in it. He has fled before the abomination that is in His house.

But why ask Me so many questions, since My death has already been decided? »

« We are not murderers. We kill if we have the right to do so, for an obvious fault. "But... I want to save You. Tell me, and I will save You. Where are Your disciples? If You hand them over to me, I will let You go free. The names of all of them: the secret ones, more than the known ones. Tell me: is Nicodemus one of Yours? And Joseph? And Gamaliel?... Speak up. You know that I can kill You, or save You. I am powerful. »

« **You are filth.** I leave, to filth, the business of the informer. **I am Light.** »

A guard lands a blow in His face, but Jesus continues:

« I am Light. Light and Truth. I have spoken openly to the world. I have taught in synagogues, and in the Temple, where the Judaeans meet. I have said nothing secretly. I repeat: Why do you ask **Me**? Ask those who have heard what I have said. They know. »

Another guard gives Him a slap in the face, shouting: « Is that how you reply to the High Priest? »

« I am speaking to Annas » says Jesus. « Caiaphas is the Pontiff. And I am speaking with the respect due to the old man. But if you think that I have said something wrong, prove it to Me. If not, why do you strike Me? »

« Leave Him alone » says Annas. « I am going to Caiaphas. Keep Him here until I tell you otherwise. And make sure He doesn't speak to anybody. » And Annas goes out.

Jesus does not speak. Not even to John, who dares to stay at the door, defying the crowd of hired ruffians. But Jesus - without saying a word - must have indicated an order to him, because John, after a sorrowful glance, goes away, and I lose sight of him.

JESUS IS TAKEN BEFORE CAIAPHAS, THE HIGH PRIEST

[Mt. 26:57-75] **TRACK D 017**

The men who had arrested Jesus led him off to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and elders were assembled. Peter followed him at a distance, and when he reached the high priest's palace, he went in and sat down with the attendants to see what the end would be. The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for evidence against Jesus, however false, on which they might pass the death sentence. But they could not find any, though several lying witnesses came forward. Eventually two stepped forward and made a statement, 'This man said: "I have power to destroy the Temple of God and in three days build it up." ' The high priest then stood up and said to him, 'Have you no answer to that? What is this evidence these men

are bringing against you?' But Jesus was silent. And the high priest said to him, 'I put you on oath by the living God to tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God.' 'The words are your own' answered Jesus. 'Moreover, I tell you that from this time onward you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power and coming on the clouds of Heaven.' At this, the high priest tore his clothes and said, 'He has blasphemed. What need of witnesses have we now? There! You have just heard the blasphemy. What is your opinion?' They answered, 'He deserves to die.' Then they spat in his face and hit him with their fists; others said as they struck him, 'Play the prophet, Christ! Who hit you then?' Meanwhile Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard, and a servant-girl came up to him and said, 'You too were with Jesus the Galilean.' But he denied it in front of them all. 'I do not know what you are talking about' he said. When he went out to the gateway another servant-girl saw him and said to the people there, 'This man was with Jesus the Nazarene.' And again, with an oath, he denied it. 'I do not know the man.' A little later the bystanders came up to Peter and said, 'You are one of them for sure! Why, your accent gives you away.' Then he started calling down curses on himself and swearing. 'I do not know the man.' At that moment the cock crew, and Peter remembered what Jesus had said, 'Before the cock crows you will have disowned me three times.' And he went outside and wept bitterly.

(*Poem* Vol. 5, pp. 551-8; *Gospel* Vol. 10, pp. 50-8)

Jesus remains with the torturers, who hit Him with ropes, spit at Him, insult and kick Him, and tear at His hair. This continues until a servant comes to say that the Prisoner is to be taken to the house of Caiaphas.

And Jesus, ill-treated and with His hands still tied, goes out again under the porch, and walks along as far as a lobby. He then passes through a yard in which many people are warming themselves near a fire, because it is now the early hours of Friday, and the night has turned cold and windy. Peter and John are also there, mingled among the hostile crowd. And they must be really brave to stay there... Jesus looks at them, and a faint smile appears on His lips, already swollen because of the treatment He has received. Then a long walk across porches, halls, yards and corridors...

But the crowd does not follow... They are pushed back into the entrance-hall of the house of Annas, and Jesus goes on alone, among guards and priests. He goes into a large hall, with many seats placed in horse-shoe fashion along three sides, leaving an empty space in the middle, beyond which are two or three seats placed on platforms...

Then the session begins...

Caiaphas asks: « What have the holy members of this Council to say with regard to this man? »

A young man, possibly a scribe, replies: « I will tell you. He infringed the Sabbath in my house. God bears witness that I am not lying. Ishmael ben Fabi never lies. »

« Is this true, defendant? »

Jesus is silent.

And another accusation: « I have seen him live with well-known prostitutes. Pretending He was a prophet, He turned His haunt into a brothel, and with heathen women, of all people. [Others] were with me. Am I telling the truth...? Tell me I am a liar, if I deserve it. »

« It is true. Quite true » is the reply.

And Caiaphas asks: « What do You say? »

Jesus is silent.

The accusations continue: « He missed no opportunity to mock us, and have us ridiculed. Common people no longer love us through His fault. »

« Do You hear them? » asks Caiaphas. « You have profaned the holy members. »

Jesus is silent.

Another charge is made: « This man is possessed. After His return from Egypt He has practised black magic. »

« How can you prove it? »

« On my faith, and on the tables of the Law. »

« A **grave** charge. Prove Your innocence. »

Jesus is silent.

(After a little while, some [other] "witnesses" are called, one of whom says:)

« ...He evoked the dead. He taught people to rebel against the Sabbath and to desecrate the altar. We swear it. He said that He wanted to destroy the Temple, and rebuild it in three days... »

Caiaphas comes down from his seat and approaches Jesus. He is small, and very fat - in striking contrast to Jesus Who - although wounded, bruised, dirty and unkempt - is still so handsome and solemn. « Are You not replying? These are horrible charges they are bringing against You! Speak, to clear Yourself of such shame. »

But Jesus is silent. He looks at Caiaphas, but does not speak.

« Reply to me. I am Your Pontiff. I appeal to You by the living God. Tell me: are You the Christ, the Son of God? »

« You have said it. I am. And you will see the Son of man - sitting on the right hand of the power of the Father - come on the clouds of the sky. Moreover, why do you ask Me? I have spoken in public for three years. I have not said anything secretly... »

One of the soldiers who is holding Him, strikes His mouth, making it bleed once again, and he shouts: « Is that how you reply, O satan, to the High Pontiff? »

And Jesus replies, meekly: « If I have spoken the truth, why do you strike Me?... »

I am the Anointed One. I am Pontiff and King. I am about to take My sceptre, and with it - as with a winnowing-fan - I will clear the threshing-floor. This Temple will be destroyed and it will rise again, new and holy. Because this one is corrupt, and God has abandoned it to its destiny. »

« **Blasphemer!** » they all shout in chorus.

And Jesus is asked: « Will You do that in three days, You silly, possessed man? »

« Not this Temple. But Mine will rise again, the Temple of the true, living, holy, three times holy, God. »

« **Anathema!** » they howl again in chorus.

Caiaphas raises his voice, tears his linen garments with affected horror, and says: « What else have we to hear from witnesses? He has blasphemed. So what shall we do? »

All in chorus they say: « **He deserves to die.** » And with disdainful scandalised gestures they go out of the hall, leaving Jesus to the mercy of the guards, and to the mob of false witnesses. With slaps, blows, spitting, blinding His eyes with a rag, and then pulling His hair violently, they drive Him here and there with His hands tied, while they ask Him: « Who hit You? Guess.» And several times they trip Him, and as He falls flat on His face, they split their sides with laughter...

Some hours go by, and the tired torturers decide to have a little rest. They take Jesus through many yards, among the insults of the already numerous mobs in the enclosure of the Pontiff's house.

Jesus arrives in the courtyard where Peter is, near a fire. And He looks at him. But Peter does not see Jesus... John is no longer there. I cannot see him. I think he has gone away with Nicodemus...

Dawn is breaking and the sky looks greenish. An order is given: the Prisoner is to be taken back to the Council Hall for a more legal trial. In the greenish dawn light, Jesus' bruises look even more dreadful on His pale face, and His eyes more sunken and glassy. He is a Jesus made dull by the sorrow of the world. It is just at this moment when Jesus is passing by - already marked by sufferings - that Peter, for the third time, denies that he knows the Christ...

A cock-crowing rends the early dawn air. And at this moment of deep silence - brought about by the appearance of the Christ - only Peter's harsh voice is heard to say: « I swear it, woman, **I do not know Him** » It is a resolute and decided statement, to which at once, like a sneer, resounds the cheeky crowing of the cockerel.

Peter gives a start. He turns around to run away, and he finds himself facing Jesus, Who looks at him with infinite compassion, and with such sad, deep sorrow that it breaks my heart. Peter sobs, and goes out, staggering as if he were drunk. He runs away behind two servants, and disappears down the semi-dark street.

Jesus is taken back into the hall. In chorus they repeat the question: « In the name of the true God, tell us: are You the Christ? » And when they receive the same reply as the previous one, they sentence Him to death, and give orders to take Him to Pilate.

Jesus, escorted by all His enemies - except Annas and Caiaphas - goes out, passing once again through those courts of the Temple... and He goes into the streets - more dragged than led - and descends towards the town, which is turning pinkish in the first light of dawn...

The people at market places - buyers and vendors - leave everything to follow the Poor Wretch... The howling train grows bigger every moment... and **features** seem

to change nature, through a sudden epidemic... as they become masks of ferocity in faces green with hatred, or red with anger...

The procession... pours noisily into a wide avenue, built above the hollow between two hills, with wonderful buildings of wealthy people at its ends.

I see the Temple once again on the top of its hill, and they made the Convict go round a vicious circle - to expose Him to the ridicule of the whole town...

Some Roman soldiers, a large number, run out from the Antonia with their lances pointed at the mob, who disperse shouting. Jesus is left in the middle of the street, with the guards, priests, scribes, and elders of the people.

A centurion says: « This man? This sedition? You will answer to Rome for this. »

« He is liable to death according to our law » is the reply.

(*Longinus*): « And since when has the "jus gladii et sanguinis" been given back to you? » asks, once again, the senior centurion, a real Roman, with a severe face and a cheek marked by a deep scar...

« We are aware that we do not have that right. We are loyal subjects of Rome... »

(*Sarcastically*) « Listen to them, Longinus » says another soldier. « Loyal! Subjects! Rotters! I would reward you with the arrows of my archers. »

And Longinus replies with ironic coolness: « Too noble a death! The backs of these mules want nothing but the lash! »...

The chief priests, scribes and elders are foaming with poison. But they want to achieve their object, and are silent... Bowing to the two officers, they ask that Jesus be led to Pontius Pilate, so that « he may judge and condemn with the well-known honest justice of Rome. »...

THE FIRST ENCOUNTER OF JESUS WITH PONTIUS PILATE

[*Jn. 18:28-38*] **TRACK D 018**

They then led Jesus from the house of Caiaphas to the Praetorium. It was now morning. They did not go into the Praetorium themselves or they would be defiled and unable to eat the Passover. So Pilate came out to them and said, 'What charge do you bring against this man?' They replied, 'If he were not a criminal, we should not be handing him over to you.' Pilate said, 'Take him yourselves, and try him by your own Law,' The Jews answered, 'We are not allowed to put a man to death.' This was to fulfill the words Jesus had spoken, indicating the way he was going to die. So Pilate went back into the Praetorium and called Jesus to him, 'Are you the king of the Jews?' he asked. Jesus replied, 'Do you ask this of your own accord, or have others spoken to you about me?' Pilate answered, 'Am I a Jew?' It is your people and the chief priests who have handed you over to me: what have you done?' Jesus replied, 'Mine is not a kingdom of this world; if my kingdom were of this world, my men would have fought to prevent my being

surrendered to the Jews. But my kingdom is not of this kind.' 'So you are a king then?' said Pilate. 'It is you who say it' answered Jesus. 'Yes, I am a king. I was born for this, I came into the world for this: to bear witness to the truth; and all who are on the side of truth listen to my voice.' 'Truth?' said Pilate. 'What is that?'; and with that he went out again to the Jews and said, 'I find no case against him.'

(*Poem* Vol. 5, pp. 558-61; *Gospel* Vol. 10, pp. 59-62)

(Jesus has been sent by Caiaphas to Pontius Pilate. Maria Valtorta writes...)

...Jesus enters the Praetorium in the middle of ten soldiers who are armed with lances and form a square around Him. The two centurions disappear behind a door, while Jesus stops in a large entrance-hall, beyond which there is a court-yard.

They come back with Pilate, the Governor, who is wearing a snow-white toga with a scarlet mantle on the top. Perhaps that is how they dressed when representing Rome officially. He comes in lazily, and with a sceptical smile on his shaven face, he rubs some leaves of lemon-scented verbena and smells them voluptuously. He goes and looks at a sun-dial, comes back, and throws some grains of incense into the brazier placed at the feet of a deity. He has citron water brought to him, and he gargles his throat. He gazes at his wavy hair in a mirror of highly polished metal. He seems to have forgotten the Convict, Who is awaiting his approval to be killed...

The front of the hall is completely open, and is raised by three high steps above the lobby, which opens onto, and is a further three steps higher than, the street. The Jews can see everything very well. They are fretting and fuming, but they dare not rebel, as they fear the lances and javelins.

At last, after going round and round the large hall, Pilate goes straight towards Jesus. He looks at Him, and asks the two centurions: « This one? »

« Yes, this man. »

« Let His accusers come » and he goes and sits on a chair placed on the platform. Above his head the insignia of Rome interlace with the golden eagles and their powerful initials...

The chief priests, scribes and elders come forward, bow in a servile manner, and stop in a little square before the Praetorium.

« Speak up and be quick. You are already at fault for disturbing the peace of the night and having the Gates forced open. But I will have that verified.

Principals and mandataries will answer, for disobeying the ordinance. » Pilate has gone towards them, remaining in the hall.

[One of Jesus' accusers says:] « We have come to submit our verdict on this man to Rome, whose divine emperor you represent. »

« What charges do you bring against Him? » asks Pilate. « He seems innocent to me... »

« He has committed crimes against the Law of our forefathers. »

« And have you come to bother me about that? Take him, and judge Him according to your laws. »

« We cannot sentence anybody to death. We are not learned. Jewish jurisprudence is a mentally deficient child, compared with the perfect Law of Rome. As ignorant people and subjects of Rome, the mistress, we are in need... »

« Since when have you become honey and butter?... But, you have spoken the truth, o masters of falsehood! You are in need of Rome! Yes. To get rid of this man Who causes you trouble. I see... » And Pilate laughs, looking at the clear sky framed like a rectangular sheet of dark turquoise, among the snow-white marble walls of the hall. « Tell me: which crimes has He committed against your laws? »

« We have found out that He was causing disturbances in our country, and was preventing people from paying the tribute to Caesar, saying that He is the Christ, the king of the Jews. »

Pilate goes back to Jesus, Who is in the middle of the hall, left there by the soldiers, tied but without escort, so obvious is His meekness. And Pilate asks Him: « Are You the king of the Jews? »

[Jesus replies:] « Are you asking this of your own accord, or through the insinuation of other people? »

« And do You expect me to care for Your kingdom? Am I a Jew? Your country and its leaders have handed You over to me, that I may judge You. What have You done? I know that You are loyal. Speak. Is it true that You aspire at reigning? »

« My Kingdom does not come from this world. If it were a kingdom of this world, My ministers and my soldiers would have fought to prevent the Jews from arresting Me. But My Kingdom is not of the Earth. And you know that I do not seek power. »

« That is true. I know. I have been told. But You do not deny that You are a king? »

« You assert it. I am a King. That is why I came into the world: to bear witness to the Truth. Those who are on the side of Truth listen to My voice. »

« **What is the Truth?** Are You a philosopher? It does not serve when facing death. Socrates died just the same. »

« But it served him in his lifetime » replies Jesus, « to live honestly. And also to die well, and to enter into the other life, without being called a traitor of civic virtues. »

« By Jove! » Pilate looks at Him for some moments, full of admiration. Then he resumes his sceptical sarcasm, makes a gesture of boredom, turns his back on Jesus, and goes towards the Judaeans. « I find no fault in Him. »

The crowd riots, seized with the panic and fear of losing both the prey, and the spectacle of a capital punishment. And one after another they shout: « He is a rebel! », « A blasphemer », « He encourages immorality », « He instigates people to rebel », « He refuses respect for Caesar », « He pretends that He is a prophet », « He practises magic », « He is a devil », « He stirs up the people, teaching all over Judaea », « **Death** to Him! », « **Death** to Him! »

« Is He a Galilean? » Pilate goes back to Jesus: « **Are You a Galilean?** Do You hear how they accuse You? Prove Your innocence. »

But Jesus is silent.

Pilate is pensive... And he decides: « Let a century take Him to Herod to be judged. He is Herod's subject. I acknowledge the right of the Tetrarch, and I assent to his verdict in advance. Tell him. Go. »

JESUS IS TAKEN TO KING HEROD, AND BACK TO PILATE

[Lk. 23:7-22] **TRACK D 019**

Pilate asked if Jesus were a Galilean; and finding that he came under Herod's jurisdiction he passed him over to Herod who was also in Jerusalem at the time. Herod was delighted to see Jesus; he had heard about him and had been wanting for a long time to set eyes on him; moreover, he was hoping to see some miracle worked by him. So he questioned him at some length; but without getting any reply. Meanwhile the chief priests and scribes were there, violently pressing their accusations. Then Herod, together with his guards, treated him with contempt and made fun of him; he put a rich cloak on him and sent him back to Pilate. And though Herod and Pilate had been enemies before, they were reconciled that same day. Pilate then summoned the chief priests and the leading men and the people. 'You brought this man before me' he said 'as a political agitator.' Now I have gone into the matter myself in your presence and found no case against the man in respect of all the charges you bring against him. Nor has Herod either, since he has sent him back to us. As you can see, the man has done nothing wrong that deserves death, so I shall have him flogged and let him go.' But as one man they howled, 'Away with him! Give us Barabbas!' (This man had been thrown into prison for causing a riot in the city and for murder.) Pilate was anxious to set Jesus free and addressed them again, but they shouted back. 'Crucify him! Crucify him!' And for the third time he spoke to them, 'Why? What harm has he done? I have found no case against him that deserves death, so I shall have him punished and let him go.'

(*Poem* Vol. 5, pp. 561-3; *Gospel* Vol. 10, pp. 62-5)

...Jesus, surrounded like a rascal by one hundred soldiers, passes through the town, and He meets Judas Iscariot, whom He had already met before, near a market. (And Maria Valtorta notes: I had forgotten to mention this before, disgusted as I was with the brawl of the people.) Jesus gives the same merciful glance at the traitor...

It is now more difficult to strike Jesus with kicks and clubs, but there is no shortage of stones and rubbish. Some of the stones hit the Roman helmets and armour - resounding without injuries. However they leave marks when they hit Jesus, Who has only His tunic on, as He had left His mantle at Gethsemane...

Jesus is now in the hall, in front of Herod. Behind Him are the scribes and Pharisees, feeling more at their ease here, and making their false charges. Only the centurion and four soldiers escort Him towards the Tetrarch.

Herod descends from his seat and walks around Jesus, listening to the accusations. He smiles, and scoffs.

He then feigns compassion and respect, which do not upset the Martyr, as his other behaviour did not perturb Him. « You are great. I know. I enquired about You and I was pleased. I had the worries of the State... But how anxious I was to say that You are great... to ask You to forgive me... [Then he refers to John the Baptist.] John's eyes... his voice... accuse me, and are always before me. You are the saint who cancels the sins of the world. Absolve me, o Christ. »

Jesus is silent.

« I heard that they accuse You of rebelling against Rome. Are You not the promised rod, to strike? »

Jesus is silent.

« They told me that You predict the end of the Temple, and of Jerusalem. But is the Temple not as eternal as a spirit, since it was wanted by God, Who is eternal? »

Jesus is silent.

« Are You mad? Have You lost Your power? Is Satan preventing You from speaking? Has he abandoned You? » Herod is laughing now.

(Herod subjects Jesus to further indignities - to which Jesus does not succumb - and then he 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 woollen garment.

They go back to Pilate...

With difficulty, the century of soldiers squeezes through the crowd, waiting in front of the proconsular building... Jesus sees the shepherds in a group... together with a small number of Galileans... Further away, He sees John, who has crept into the hall, half-hidden behind a column...

The centurion salutes Pontius Pilate, and reports.

« Here again?! » says Pilate. « Phew! Cursed be this race! Make the mob come forward, and bring the Accused here. Oh! what a nuisance! » He goes towards the crowd, stopping again in the middle of the hall.

« Jews, listen. You have brought me this man as an instigator of the people. I have examined Him in your presence, and I have not found, in Him, any of the crimes of which He is accused. Herod did not find any more than I did. And he has sent Him back to us. He does not deserve death. Rome has spoken. But, in order not to displease you, and deprive you of amusement, I will give you Barabbas. And I will order Him [meaning Jesus] to be given forty lashes. That is enough. »

« No, no! Not Barabbas! Not Barabbas! **Death to Jesus!** And a dreadful death! Release Barabbas, and condemn the Nazarene **to death.** »

« But listen! I said I will have Him lashed. Is that not enough? Then I will have Him scourged! It is terrible, you know? He may die through it. What wrong has He done? I find no fault in Him. Then I will set Him free. »

« **Crucify Him! Crucify Him! Death to Him!** You are the protector of criminals! Heathen! You are Satan, too! »

The crowd advances, and the first formation of soldiers wavers, as they too pressed to make use of their lances. But the second line, descending one step, swing their lances and free their companions.

« Let Him be scourged » Pilate orders a centurion.

« How many blows? »

« As many as you like... »

JESUS IS SCOURGED AT THE PILLAR

[Jn. 19:1] **TRACK D 020**

Pilate then had Jesus taken away and scourged.

(Poem Vol. 5, pp. 563-4; Gospel Vol. 10, pp. 65-7)

Jesus is led by four soldiers to the court-yard beyond the hall. In the middle of the court-yard, which is all paved with coloured marble, there is a high column... About three metres from the floor, it has an iron bar protruding at least a metre, with a ring on its end, to which Jesus is tied, with His hands joined above His head, after He has been undressed. He has on only short linen drawers and sandals.

His hands, tied at His wrists, are then raised up as far as the ring, so that, although tall, He rests only the tips of His toes on the floor... And even that position is a torture.

I have read, I do not know where, that the column was low and that Jesus was bent over it. That may be. I write what I see.

Behind Jesus stands one who looks like an executioner, with a clear Jewish profile. In front of Him there is another man, who looks like the previous one. They are armed with scourges, made of seven leather strips tied to a handle, and ending with small lead hammers. They begin to strike Him rhythmically, as if they were practising. One in front and one behind, so that Jesus' trunk is in a whirl of lashes and scourges.

The four soldiers, to whom Pilate had handed Jesus, are indifferent to what is going on, and are playing dice with other three soldiers who have just arrived. And the voices of the players follow the rhythm of the sound of the scourges, which hiss like snakes, and then resound, like stones striking the stretched skin of a drum.

They beat the poor body, which is so slender and as white as old ivory, and then becomes covered with stripes that at first are a brighter and brighter pink shade, then violet. The body then displays blue swellings full of blood, and the skin breaks, letting blood flow from all sides. They redouble their cruelty on His thorax and abdomen, but there is no shortage of blows given to His

legs, arms and even to His head, so that no fragment of His skin may be left without pain.

And not a moan... If Jesus were not held up by the rope, He would fall. But He does not fall, and does not groan. His head hangs over His chest, after so many blows, as if He had fainted.

« Hey! Stop! He must be alive when He is killed » shouts a soldier mockingly.

The two executioners stop and wipe their perspiration.

« We are exhausted » they say. « Give us our pay, so that we may have a drink... »

« I would give you the gallows! But here you are... » and a soldier throws a large coin to each executioner.

One of the soldiers says: « You have done a good job. He looks like a mosaic. Titus, was this man really Alexander's love? (He is referring to another soldier who had befriended Jesus.) We must let him know, so that he may mourn over His death. Let us untie Him. »

They untie Him, and Jesus falls on the floor like a dead body. They leave Him there, pushing Him now and again with their feet... to see whether He moans. But He is silent...

JESUS IS CROWNED WITH THORNS

[Jn. 19:2-3] **TRACK D 021**

And after this, the soldiers twisted some thorns into a crown and put it on his head, and dressed him in a purple robe. They kept coming up to him and saying, 'Hail, king of the Jews!'; and they slapped him in the face.

(*Poem* Vol. 5, pp. 564-6; *Gospel* Vol. 10, pp. 67-9)

(Supervised by some soldiers, after His most brutal scourging, Jesus is eventually untied, and has collapsed on the floor. Concerned that He might be dead, one of the soldiers throws water over Him...)

...In vain, Jesus presses His hands against the floor, trying to stand up.

« Come on! Quick! Are You weak? Here is some refreshment » says another soldier in a sneering voice. And with the shaft of his spear he delivers a blow to Jesus' face, striking it between the right cheekbone and the nose, which begins to bleed¹.

Jesus opens His eyes and looks around. His eyes are clouded... He stares at the soldier who struck Him, wipes the blood with His hand, and then, with much effort, He stands up.

« Get dressed. It is immodest to stay like that. You lewd man! » They all stand around Him, laughing.

He obeys without speaking. But He alone knows how much He suffers. He stoops to the ground... and His wounds open up even more when the skin is stretched, and more wounds are formed as the blisters burst.

A soldier gives a kick to His garments and scatters them. Every time Jesus reaches them, staggering to where they lie, a soldier pushes them away or throws them in a different direction. And Jesus, suffering bitterly, goes after them without uttering a word, while the soldiers jeer at Him obscenely.

He can dress Himself again at last. And He can also put on the white tunic, which was left in a corner and is still clean. He seems to wish to conceal His other poor red garment, which only yesterday was so beautiful, and now is filthy with rubbish, and stained with the blood sweated at Gethsemane. Furthermore, before putting on His short vest, He dries His face with it, cleaning it of dust and spittle. The poor holy face then looks clean, marked only by bruises and small cuts. He tidies His hair - hanging bedraggled - and then His beard, out of an inborn need to be personally tidy.

He then squats in the sunshine... My Jesus is shivering... Fever begins to torture Him with its cold shivers. And He feels weak, because of the blood He has lost, and through fasting and walking so much.

They tie His hands once again. The rope begins to cut into His wrists, where the torn skin has left a mark like a red bracelet.

One of the soldiers says: « Now! What shall we do with Him? I am bored! »

« Wait. The Jews want a king. Now we will give them one. Him... » says another soldier.

And he runs outside, and comes back with branches of wild hawthorn. They are still flexible, because spring-time keeps the branches relatively tender, whilst the long sharp thorns are hard. With a dagger they remove leaves and buds, they bend the branches - forming a circle - and they place them on His poor head. But the cruel crown falls down on His neck.

« It does not fit. Make it narrower. Take it off. »

They take the crown off and scratch His cheeks - risking to blind Him - and they tear some of His hair off in doing so. They make the crown smaller. Now it is too small, and although they press it down, driving the thorns into His head, it threatens to fall. They take it off once again, tearing more of His hair. They adjust it, and it now fits. At the front there are three thorny cords. At the back, where the ends of the three branches interweave, there is a real knot of thorns that penetrate into the nape of His neck.

« Do You see how well You look? Natural bronze and real rubies. Look at Yourself, O king... » says the inventor of the torture scoffingly.

The other soldier says: « A crown is not sufficient to make a king. Purple and sceptre are required. In the stable there is a cane, and in the sewer there is a red chamois. Get them, Cornelius. »

And once they have them, they put the dirty red rag on Jesus' shoulders. But before putting the cane in His hands, they beat His head with it, bowing and greeting: « Hail, king of the Jews. » And they roar with laughter.

Jesus does not react. He lets them sit Him on the « throne » which is a tub for watering horses, turned upside-down. He lets them strike and scoff at Him, without ever uttering a word. He only looks at them, with glances of such kindness and such atrocious sorrow...

1. In *The Holy Shroud and the Visions of Maria Valtorta*, Msgr. Cerri discusses how an examination of the Face, on the Holy Shroud, reveals that there are grazes everywhere, "especially on the right side, which is also disfigured, as if, underneath the bleeding grazes there were hematomas". A

close examination of the Face of Jesus in a rose petal photograph given to a Readers' Group member in Canada in 1995, reveals what appears to be a swelling between the nose and the right cheekbone, and a dark patch – perhaps a bruising or a shadow – between the swelling and the right eye.

THE TERROR AND DESPAIR OF JUDAS

[Mt. 27:3-10] **TRACK D 022**

When he found that Jesus had been condemned, Judas his betrayer was filled with remorse and took the thirty silver pieces back to the chief priests and elders. 'I have sinned,' he said. 'I have betrayed innocent blood.' 'What is it to us?' they replied. 'That is your concern.' And flinging down the silver pieces in the sanctuary he made off, and went and hanged himself. The chief priests picked up the silver pieces and said, 'It is against the Law to put this into the treasury; it is blood money.' So they discussed the money and bought the potter's field with it, as a graveyard for foreigners, and this is why the field is called the Field of Blood today. The words of the prophet Jeremiah were then fulfilled: "And they took the thirty silver pieces, the sum at which the precious one was priced by children of Israel, and they gave them for the potter's field, just as the Lord directed me."

(Poem Vol. 5, pp. 576-80; Gospel Vol. 10, pp. 82-6)

(The scene now centres on Judas, who has been running like a madman through the streets of Jerusalem, has been bitten by a dog on his cheek, and has returned to the Garden of Gethsemane where he discovers Jesus' mantle stained with blood, and imagines a sea of blood covering the Earth...)

Judas' face is frightening... He runs away through the olive-grove, without going back the way he came. He looks like someone being chased by wild beasts. He goes back to town. He envelops himself in his mantle as best he can, and he tries to cover the wound and his face as much as possible. He turns his steps towards the Temple.

But while going there, at a crossroad, he finds himself in front of the rabble who are dragging Jesus to Pilate. He cannot withdraw, because other people press him from behind, as they flock to see. And, tall as he is, he sees. He meets Jesus' eyes... They exchange glances for a moment. Then Jesus, tied and beaten, passes by, and Judas falls on his back, as if he had fainted. The crowd tramples on him pitilessly, and he does not react. He obviously prefers to be trodden on by the whole world, rather than meet those eyes.

When the pack has gone by with the Martyr, and the street is empty, he stands up again, and runs to the Temple. He bumps against - and almost overthrows - a guard on duty at the gate of the Temple enclosure. Other guards run to prevent the frantic man from entering. But like a furious bull, he routs them all. One of them - who clings to him to prevent him from going into the hall of the Sanhedrin - is seized by the throat, strangled, and thrown

down the three steps. If not dead, he is certainly at the point of death.

Judas stands in the middle of the hall, just where Jesus was previously. « I don't want your money, may you be damned. » He looks like a demon who has come out of hell. Bleeding, unkempt, in a state of delirious fury, slaving, his hands like claws, he shouts and seems to be barking, so shrill and hoarse is his howling voice.

(He then sees blood-stains on the floor...)

« Even here, is there blood even here? Everywhere! His blood is everywhere! But how much blood has the Lamb of God got, to cover the whole Earth like this without dying? And I have shed it! Through your instigation. Cursed! May you be cursed for ever!... Curse me! Keep your money, and may it strangle your souls in your throats, as the halter strangles me. » He throws the purse in Caiaphas' teeth, making his mouth bleed, and goes away howling, while the coins tinkle and spread out on the floor. No one dares to stop him.

He goes out. He runs along the streets. And he fatally meets with Jesus twice again, as Jesus goes to and comes back from Herod.

Judas leaves the town centre, taking the poorest lanes at random, and ends up again at the house of the Last Supper. He knocks again... and again... The mistress of the house comes and half-opens the door. Seeing the man so agitated and altered beyond recognition, she utters a cry, and tries to close the door. But Judas opens it wide with a push of his shoulder, and, knocking down the terrified woman, he goes in.

He runs towards the little door into the Supper Room. He opens it and goes in...

He remains still for some time, until his panting - after so much running - calms down. He then looks up and sees the chalice. And he realises where he is.

He stands up as if he were possessed. But the chalice enchants him. A little red wine is still in the bottom of it, and the sun, shining on the metal (it looks like silver) inflames the liquid. « **Blood! Blood!** Blood also **here! His Blood! His Blood!** "Do this in memory of Me!... Take this and drink it. This is My Blood... I am cursed!... He cannot forgive me... Death! Death to me!... »

He goes out, and suddenly finds himself in front of Mary. She looks as pale as if She had lost all Her blood. Grief has made Her eyes resemble - even more - those of Her Son. Judas meets those eyes that look at him with the same sorrowful conscious knowledge with which Jesus looked at him in the street. And uttering a frightened « Oh! » he leans against the wall.

« Judas! » says Mary, « Judas, why have you come? » The same words as Jesus used. And they are spoken with sad love. Judas remembers them and shouts.

« Judas » repeats Mary « what have you done? To so much love, have you replied by betraying? » Mary's voice is a trembling caress.

Judas is about to run away. Mary calls him with a voice that should have converted a demon. « Judas! Judas! Stop! Stop! Listen! I am telling you in His name: repent, Judas. He forgives... »

Judas has run away...

He meets John, who is going towards the house to get Mary. The sentence has been passed, and Jesus is about to go to Calvary. It is time to take Mary to Her Son. John recognises Judas, although there is little left of the handsome Judas of not long ago. « **You** here? » John says to him with obvious disgust. « **You** here? May you be cursed, you killer of the Son of God! The Master has been condemned. Rejoice, if you can. But get out of the way. I am going to get the Mother. »...

Judas runs away. He has enveloped his head in the tatters of his mantle, leaving only a small opening for his eyes. The few people who are not near the Praetorium avoid him, as if they saw a madman...

He wanders about the country. Now and again the wind carries an echo of the clamour made by the crowds who follow Jesus, cursing Him. Every time such echo reaches Judas, he howls like a jackal.

I think that he has really gone mad... He goes up and down the hills around Jerusalem. And his eyes are irresistibly attracted towards Golgotha. Twice, from afar, he sees the procession wind uphill. He looks, and howls.

The procession is now on the top of a little hill covered with olive-trees. He looks towards Golgotha, he sees the crosses being erected, and he realises that Jesus has been crucified...

Two fine streams of saliver run down from his howling mouth. The cheek that was bitten is livid and swollen, making his face look twisted... And his **eyes!**... They roll, squint, and are phosphorescent. The eyes of a real demon.

He pulls away the cord of thick red wool that encircles his waist three times. He tests its solidity by winding it round an olive-tree and pulling it with all his strength. It resists. It is solid.

He chooses a suitable olive-tree... He climbs the tree. He fastens a noose solidly to the strongest branch, hanging out over the empty space... He looks at Golgotha for the last time. He then puts his head into the slip-knot... and then, with a jerk, he lets himself slip into the empty space...

THE TWO GREAT LOVES OF JESUS

(*Notebooks 1945-50*, pp. 394-7; *Notebooks 1943*, p. 69)

TRACK D 023

(*Jesus says to Maria Valtorta:*)

"Do you want to know who was the apostle who loved more than any other? John. It was truly John. Before and after the Passion. Before and after Pentecost..."

"And who is the apostle I loved the most? It is Judas Iscariot. Do not stare in disbelief, or be startled. It's true. I loved Judas Iscariot more than anyone else. And now I'll explain to you, and you'll understand.

"John was the beloved one... Everyone knows the truth. He was good, pure, and faithful. It is obvious that he attracted the love of God and the love of the Man - that is, the love of Jesus the God-Man.

"But tell me: is it more wearisome to perform an ac-

tion demanding continuous effort, which we know beforehand will be futile - or to perform another which, instead of effort, involves joy and repose in carrying it out? The former, isn't it? And who will have more merit?... In the former case, where the sole purpose is to do one's full duty with no hope of receiving compensation, or in the latter, where minute by minute we are amply repaid for what we are doing? Whoever carries out the former act will have more merit..."

"And... do you know what kind of love people have who - out of the heroism of love alone, and duty towards God and their brothers and sisters - continue showing interest and concern: in bringing their wicked brothers and sisters benefit, and in trying to make them good and glorify the Lord? They have **perfect** love. The love which carries out everything, forgives everything, and overcomes all, moved by the perfect end of doing the work which is pleasing to God.

"Do they not succeed? Is it clear that they do not succeed? Is it clear that God knows they do not succeed? It doesn't matter. They act, all the same. It is the heroism of duty done to perfection, and it shows perfection in sentiment. For if people did not love, in God, those who they know are delinquents, traitors, and incorrigible in their perverse sentiments - they could not love such delinquents. But they love them with the sublime love, which swelled my Heart on the Cross - when I was not praying for the just, but calling for the Father's forgiveness of my killers.

"This is the love I want, in you, for all those who hate you.... If only you knew how this love we give to those who are our unbending enemies - the unconvertible - works miracles!..."

"Love is not lost. Not even an infinitesimal part of love... remains without fruit. Gathered in by the angels, noted by God, it rises into the treasury of Heaven and there serves... to acquire, bring growth to, and treat... wounded and sick souls. The love given for the conversion of our crucifiers - and remaining without fruit for them on account of their perverse will - goes on to nourish, with grace, **other** souls who are unknown on earth, but who will be known in Heaven..."

"I said, 'Whoever loves much will be forgiven much.' It is true, and it is just. The more people love, the more they deserve forgiveness by those offended. But, in addition, those who forgive more, show they love much. And those who forgive all - at all times everything, until the hour of judgment comes - love, not much, but **totally**. That is the way I loved Judas Iscariot. **Totally**. I also loved the others that way, especially John. But it was a matter of *justice* to love them like that... But Judas! To love **Judas!** To love Judas completely, when I was aware of every wrinkle in his heart! To love him because we are told, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself!'

"You see, soul of mine, many repeat this command - from pulpits, teaching roles, altars, and confessionals - ...and believe they are fully familiar with it. They say, 'The second commandment is to love one's neighbour as oneself.'... But this is said without specifying whether the neighbour is good, evil, submissive or unruly, loving or

hateful. No, 'You shall love your neighbour'... Entirely. Good or evil. With joyful or painful love. But always your neighbour *as a whole*.

"This love for the *entirety* of one's neighbor demands a spirit of highly perfected mercy, meekness, and humility. For it is hard - hard indeed - to be able to love certain neighbors! One must be very, very well grounded in charity to be able to do so. But here, too, you do not lack a model. Here is your model: I am, Jesus! Imitate Me, and you will be perfect as I want you to be for your eternal joy.

"The horrendous, shadowy figure of Judas, that I have so amply displayed in the Work, is not without a purpose. I certainly did not take pleasure in describing that tangle of hellish snakes! But I revealed it to you because, in doing so, I also revealed the way spiritual teachers, and all Christians, as well must act to wards the many Judases peopling the earth, whom none can fail to encounter during their mortal day

"To spiritual teachers and all others I say, 'Imitate Me in this perfect love, and you will possess a love similar to that of Jesus, your Teacher.'"

(In an earlier writing of Maria Valtorta, Jesus says of Judas:)

"If he had come under the Cross where I was dying, and had said to Me, 'Forgiveness!' He would have been the first of My redeemed souls, because he was already the greatest sinner..."

TRACK D 024

THE STATIONS OF THE CROSS

(INTRODUCTION, AND GOSPEL READING FOR THE FIRST STATION)

(These 14 stations correspond, in substance, with the traditional stations depicted in churches and illustrated in prayer books. In Maria Valtorta's descriptions, however, the sequence is different. The three falls of Jesus occur one after the other, and the assistance given by Simon of Cyrene begins just as Jesus meets His mother, and immediately before the Tenth Station, where Jesus is stripped of His garments.

Five separate Gospel readings cover the substance of the 14 stations.)

For the first station: [Mt. 27:15-26]

At festival time it was the governor's practice to release a prisoner for the people, anyone they chose. Now there was at that time a notorious prisoner whose name was Barabbas. So when the crowd gathered, Pilate said to them, 'Which do you want me to release for you: Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?' For Pilate knew it was out of jealousy that they had handed him over. Now as he was seated in the chair of judgement, his wife sent him a message, 'Have nothing to do with that man; I have been upset all day by a dream I had about him.' The chief priests and the elders, however, had persuaded the crowd to

demand the release of Barabbas and the execution of Jesus. So when the governor spoke and asked them, 'Which of the two do you want me to release for you?' they said, 'Barabbas.' But in that case' Pilate said to them, 'what am I to do with Jesus who is called Christ?' They all said, 'Let him be crucified!' 'Why?' he asked 'What harm has he done?' But they shouted all the louder, 'Let him be crucified!' Then Pilate saw that he was making no impression, that in fact a riot was imminent. So he took some water, washed his hands in front of the crowd and said, 'I am innocent of this man's blood. It is your concern.' And the people, to a man, shouted back, 'His blood be on us and on our children!' Then he released Barabbas for them. He ordered Jesus to be handed over to be crucified.

TRACK D 025

THE FIRST STATION: JESUS IS CONDEMNED TO DEATH

(Poem Vol. 5, pp. 566-8; Gospel Vol. 10, pp. 69-72)

(Jesus has been accused, scourged at Pilate's command, and crowned with thorns by His torturers. The scene is a lobby of the Praetorium, looking down on one of Jerusalem's streets. It is a sultry day, and the sun is almost at its zenith, lighting up people's eyes and faces. Pilate is telling a crowd of Jews to let Jesus go, but they object, and want to see Him. Pilate calls for Jesus. This is what Maria Valtorta sees, hears, and writes:)

As Jesus goes out into the lobby, and is visible in the square formed by the soldiers, Pontius Pilate points to Him, saying: « Here is the Man. Your King. Is that still not sufficient? »...

The people shout, they shake their fists, they want His death...

Jesus is holding Himself upright. And I can assure you that He never had such a noble bearing as now. Not even when He performed the most wonderful miracles... He looks around at the crowd, and in the sea of rancorous faces, he looks for - and finds - some friendly ones. How many? Less than twenty among thousands of enemies... He lowers His head, struck by such abandonment. A tear falls... and another... and another... The sight of His tears does not engender compassion, but gives rise to fiercer hatred...

Pilate says: « So? Let Him go. It is justice. »

« No. Death to Him. Crucify Him. »

« I will give you Barabbas. »

« No. The Christ! »

« In that case, take Him yourselves. And crucify Him by yourselves, because I find no fault in Him, to do that. »

« He said that He is the Son of God. Our Law inflicts death on whoever is guilty of such blasphemy. »

Pilate becomes pensive. He goes back in, and sits on his little throne. He rests his forehead in his hand, and his elbow on his knee - and scrutinises Jesus. « Come near me » he says.

Jesus goes to the foot of the platform.

« Is it true? Tell me. »

Jesus is silent.

« Where do You come from? Who is God? »

« He is the All. »

« And then? What does the All mean? What is the All for one who is dying? You are mad... God does not exist. I do. »

Jesus is silent...

A Roman woman comes in and kneels down, handing a waxed tablet from Pilate's wife, Claudia... The woman withdraws backwards, while Pilate reads.

« I am advised to avoid Your being put to death » he says ... *(Pausing, and more quietly)* You frighten me. »

Jesus is silent.

« Do You know that I have the power - to free You, or to crucify You? »

« You would have no power, if it were not given to you from Above. Therefore, he who handed Me over to you, is more guilty than you are. »

« Who is it? Your God? *(softly)* I find this fearful... »

Jesus is silent.

Pilate is on tenterhooks... He is afraid of God's punishment, he is afraid of Rome, he fears Judaeen revenges. For a moment he overcomes the fear of God. He goes to the front of the hall and in a thundering voice he shouts: « He is not guilty. »

« If you say so, you are no friend of Caesar's. He who proclaims himself king, is his enemy. You want to free the Nazarene. We will inform Caesar of that. »

Pilate is seized with the fear of man.

« So, you want Him dead? Let it be so. But the blood of this just man is not to stain my hands » and having a basin brought to him, he washes his hands in the presence of the people, who appear to be seized with frenzy, while they shout: « His blood on us. His blood be on us and on our children. We're not afraid of Him. Crucify Him! Crucify Him! »

Pontius Pilate goes back to his little throne, and he calls the centurion Longinus, and a slave. He orders the slave to bring him a board, on which he places a notice, and has the words written on it: « Jesus Nazarene, King of the Jews ». And he shows it to the people.

« No. No. Not so. Not king of the Jews. But that He said that He is king of the Jews. »

« What I have written, I have written » says Pilate severely. And standing upright, he stretches his hand forward with its palm turned down, and he orders: « Let Him go to the cross. Soldier, go. Prepare the cross. » And he descends from his throne, without even looking towards the uproarious crowd - or at the pale Condemned Man...

Jesus is left in the middle of the hall, guarded by the soldiers, awaiting the cross.

TRACK D 026

FOR STATIONS 2 to 11: [Lk. 23:26-44]

As they were leading him away they seized on a man, Simon from Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, and made him shoulder the cross and

carry in behind Jesus. Large numbers of people followed him, and of women too, who mourned and lamented for him. But Jesus turned to them and said, 'Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, weep rather for yourselves and for your children. For the days will surely come when people will say, "Happy are those who are barren, the wombs that have never borne, the breasts that have never suckled!" Then they will begin to say to the mountains, "Fall on us!"; to the hills, "cover us! For if men use the green wood like this, what will happen when it is dry?" Now with them they were also leading out two criminals to be executed. When they reached the place called The Skull, they crucified him there, and the two criminals also, one on the right, the other on the left. Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them; they do not know what they are doing.' Then they cast lots to share out his clothing. The people stayed there watching him. As for the leaders, they jeered at him, 'He saved others,' they said 'let him save himself if he is the Christ of God, the Chosen One.' The soldiers mocked him too, and when they approached to offer him vinegar they said, 'If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself.' Above him there was an inscription: 'This is the King of the Jews.' One of the criminals hanging there abused him. 'Are you not the Christ?' he said. 'Save yourself and us as well.' But the other spoke up and rebuked him. 'Have you no fear of God at all?' he said. 'You got the same sentence as he did, but in our case we deserved it; we are paying for what we did. But this man has done nothing wrong. Jesus,' he said 'remember me when you come into your kingdom.' 'Indeed, I promise you,' he replied 'today you will be with me in paradise.' It was now about the sixth hour and, with the sun eclipsed, a darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour.

TRACK D 027

THE SECOND STATION: JESUS CARRIES HIS CROSS

(Poem Vol. 5, pp. 592-6; Gospel Vol. 10, pp. 101-6)

(John, Jesus' beloved apostle, has returned from Jerusalem's streets to the house of the Last Supper, and to Mary - Who asks him where Jesus is. John stammers, saying that He has not been hurt badly, and Mary says:)

« Do not lie, John. Not even out of pity for a mother... I know. Since yesterday evening I have followed Him in His sorrow. You cannot see it, but My flesh is bruised by the same scourges as His, and the same thorns are piercing My forehead. I felt the blows... everything. But now... I no longer see. Now I do not know where My Son is. He has been condemned to the cross!... to the cross!... to the cross!... Oh! God, give Me strength! He must see Me. I must not feel My sorrow while He feels His. Then when everything... is over, then let Me die, o God, if You so wish. Not now. Not for His sake. So that He may see Me. Let us go, John. Where is Jesus? »

« He is leaving Pilate's house » Jesus says. « That clamour is the crowd shouting around Him, tied as He is. He is on the steps of the Praetorium, awaiting the cross, or already on His way to Golgotha. »

(Mary tells John to bring the women disciples to Her, and while John goes to do this, Mary waits, and trembles. When John comes back with the weeping women, Mary leans on him like a blind woman, and they leave the house, to be with Jesus...)

Some time goes by, not more than half an hour, perhaps even less. (At the Praetorium) Longinus, who is entrusted with the task of superintending the execution, gives his orders.

But before Jesus is taken outside into the street, to receive the cross and set out, Longinus, who has looked at Him two or three times - with a curiosity that is already tinged with compassion, and with the expert eye of one who is accustomed to certain situations - approaches Jesus with a soldier, and offers Him a refreshment: a cup of wine, I think. In fact he pours a light blond rosy liquid out of a real military canteen. « It will do You good. You must be thirsty. The sun is shining outside. And the way is a long one. »

And Jesus replies to him: « May God reward you for your compassion. But do not deprive yourself of it. »

« I am healthy and strong... I am not depriving myself... »

Jesus no longer refuses, and takes a draught of the drink. As His hands are already untied... He can do it by Himself. But He refuses to take more...

He then says: « May God reward you with His blessings, for this comfort. » And He smiles again... a heart-rending smile with His swollen, wounded lips, which move with difficulty - also because the severe contusion between His nose and His right cheek-bone - caused by the blow with a cudgel He received in the court-yard after the flagellation - is swelling considerably.

(The two robbers arrive, the soldiers are assembled, and Longinus mounts his black horse. The crosses are then brought out. Jesus' Cross is at least four metres in length, longer than the others, and strongly constructed. A board with the inscription: « Jesus Nazarene King of the Jews » is placed round His neck, and the procession begins to move forward...)

It is immediately clear that Jesus is in an extremely weak condition. He staggers... He is hampered by the cross weighing on His shoulder which is all covered with sores; by the board of the inscription that sways in front of Him, cutting into His neck; and by the oscillations caused to the body by the long stake of the cross, which bounces on the steps, and then on the uneven ground.

The Jews laugh... and shout to the soldiers: « Push Him. Make Him fall. In the dust, the blasphemer! » But the soldiers do only what they have to do, that is, they order the Condemned One to stay in the middle of the road, and walk.

Longinus spurs his horse, and the procession begins to slowly move forward. Longinus would like to make

haste, taking the shortest route to Golgotha... But the unrestrained mob shouts: « You must not do that! You must not!... The Law prescribes that condemned men are to be seen in the town where they have sinned! »...

For peace sake, Longinus turns along the way that takes them towards the town...

Jesus proceeds, panting... He stumbles over stones and holes. At each stumble, it is painful, as it jerks the cross, which knocks against the crown, and which rubs against the wounded shoulder - widening the sores, and increasing the pain.

The Jews cannot hit Him directly any longer. But odd stones and blows with cudgels still strike Him... The soldiers defend Him as best they can... and upon arriving at a certain spot, they make a perfect manoeuvre, and, notwithstanding shouts and threats, the procession deviates abruptly along a street that goes directly towards... the place of the execution.

THE THIRD STATION: JESUS FALLS THE FIRST TIME

(Poem Vol. 5, pp. 596-7; Gospel Vol. 10, pp. 106-7)

Many people have already assembled at the Judicial Gate... Shortly before arriving there, Jesus stumbles. Only the quick intervention of a soldier... prevents Him from falling on the ground. The rabble laugh, and shout: « Leave Him! He used to say to everybody: "Rise". Let Him rise now... »

Beyond the Gate there is a stream and a little bridge. Walking on the uneven boards is a new fatigue for Jesus, as the long stake of the cross bounces, even more violently... And stones from the stream now fly and hit the poor Martyr...

The ascent to Calvary begins. A barren road, without the least shade, paved with uneven stones, goes straight up the hill... For one who is healthy and strong it is not much... But I think that Jesus' heart must have been in a very bad state, after the flagellation and the sweating of blood... and I take only these two things into consideration...

I see a protruding stone, and as Jesus is exhausted - He can lift His feet only a little - He stumbles, falls on His right knee, (and) holds Himself up with His left hand. The crowd howls with joy...

THE FOURTH STATION: JESUS MEETS HIS MOTHER

(Poem Vol. 5, pp. 602-3; Gospel Vol. 10, pp. 115-6)

...The man from Cyrene reaches Jesus just as He turns towards His Mother, Whom only now He sees, coming towards Him - because He had been moving forward, so bent, with His eyes almost closed, as if He were blind. He shouts: « Mother! »

Since He began being tortured, it is the first word that expresses His sufferings. Because in that cry there is the confession of everything, and of all the dreadful sorrow of His spirit, of His morale, of His body. It is the heart-

broken and heart-breaking cry of a little boy who dies all alone - among torturers and the most cruel tortures... - and who goes so far as to be afraid of his own breathing. It is the wailing of a raving little boy - tormented by nightmare visions... - who wants his mummy, his dear mummy...

Mary presses Her hand against Her heart, as if She had been stabbed, and She staggers... Then She collects Herself, quickens Her step, and while going towards Her tortured Son with outstretched arms, She shouts: « Son! » But She says so in such a way, that whoever has not got the heart of a hyena, feels it is breaking, because of so much grief.

I notice signs of compassion even among the Romans... and yet they are soldiers, accustomed to slaughters, marked by scars... But the words: « Mother! » and « Son! » are always understood, and they raise waves of compassion everywhere...

The man from Cyrene feels such pity... He sees that Mary cannot embrace Her Son because of the cross, and after stretching Her arms out, She lets them drop, convinced that She is unable to do so... The man from Cyrene then hastens to remove the cross, and he does so with the gentleness of a father, in order not to disturb the crown, or rub against His sores.

But Mary cannot kiss Her Son... Even Her lightest touch would be a torture for His torn flesh, and She refrains... Only the two anguished souls kiss each other.

TRACK D 028

THE FIFTH STATION: SIMON FROM SYRENE HELPS JESUS CARRY HIS CROSS

(*Poem* Vol. 5, pp. 601-2; *Gospel* Vol. 10, pp. 114-5)

(Longinus sees a cart, loaded with vegetables, waiting for the crowd to pass. It belongs to a man from Cyrene, whose two sons are laughing at the fleeing Judaeans. The man - who is about 40 to 50 years old, and strong-looking - is standing next to his little, frightened donkey, looking attentatively at the procession. Longinus looks him up and down, and says in a commanding voice:)

« Man, come here. »

The man from Cyrene pretends he has not heard. But one cannot trifle with Longinus. He repeats the order in such a way, that the man throws the reins to one of his sons, and approaches the centurion.

« Do you see that man? » he asks. And in doing so, he turns round to point out Jesus - and he sees Mary, Who is imploring the soldiers to let Her pass. He takes pity on Her and he shouts: « Let the Woman pass. » He then resumes speaking to the man from Cyrene: « He cannot go any further, laden as He is. You are strong. Take His cross, and carry it for Him, as far as the summit. »

« I can't... I have the donkey... it's restless... the boys can't hold it... »

But Longinus says: « Go, if you do not want to lose your donkey, and get twenty blows as punishment. »

The man from Cyrene dares to react no longer. He shouts to the boys: « Go home and be quick. And say that I'm coming... » - and he then goes towards Jesus.

THE SIXTH STATION: VERONICA WIPES THE FACE OF JESUS

(*Poem* Vol. 5, pp. 598-600; *Gospel* Vol. 10, pp. 110-2)

(Longinus, afraid that Jesus might die on the steep road, gives an order to take a longer road, which winds up the mountain, and is not so steep ...)

The people following Jesus are shouting with rage... While hurling obscenities at the Condemned One and at those leading Him, some follow the judicial procession, and some go on almost running, up the steep road... to get a very good position on the top.

The women, who are going on ahead, turn round upon hearing the shouts, and see the procession turn towards them...

They approach Jesus, weeping, and kneel at His feet, while He stops panting... and yet He still knows how to smile at those compassionate women and at their escort, who uncovers himself to show that he is (the shepherd disciple) Jonathan. But the guards do not let him pass. Only the women...

Another woman (known as Nike, but later identified as Veronica) joins them... She is accompanied by a young maidservant, holding a small casket in her arms. Veronica opens it, takes out a square piece of very fine linen cloth, and offers it to the Redeemer. He accepts it, but as He cannot manage by Himself - with only one hand - the compassionate woman helps Him take it to His face, watching not to knock against the crown. And Jesus presses the cool linen cloth to His poor face, and holds it there, as if He felt a great relief. He then hands the linen cloth back, and He says: « Thank you... »

THE SEVENTH STATION: JESUS FALLS A SECOND TIME

(*Poem* Vol. 5, p. 597; *Gospel* Vol. 10, p. 107)

... He proceeds, bending and panting more and more - congested, feverish... The board that swings in front of Him obstructs His sight; His long tunic - the front part of which trails on the ground, as He now bends while He walks - hampers His steps. He stumbles again, and falls on both knees, hurting Himself where He is already wounded; and the cross - which slips out of His hands, violently striking His back, and dropping to the ground - compels Him to bend to pick it up, and to toil painfully to put it back on His shoulder. While He does, one can clearly see on His right shoulder the wound made by the rubbing of the cross, which has opened up the many sores of the scourges, making them all into one, from which serum and blood transude, so that section of His white tunic is all stained. The people even applaud, for the joy of seeing Him fall so badly...

THE EIGHTH STATION:

JESUS CONSOLES THE WOMEN OF JERUSALEM

(Poem Vol. 5, p. 600; Gospel Vol. 10, p. 112)

(Jesus, struggling for breath, then speaks to all the women...)

« Thank you, Johanna, thank you, Nike, Sarah... Marcella, Eliza... Lydia,... Anne Valeria... and you... But... do not weep for Me, daughters of Jerusalem... But for your sins, and those of your town... Bless Johanna... for not having more sons... See... It is God's mercy... not to have sons... because... they suffer for this... And you... too, Elizabeth... Better as it was... than among decides... And you, mothers... weep for your sons, because... this hour will not pass without punishment... And what a punishment, if it is so, for... the Innocent... You will weep then... for having conceived... and suckled, and for... having more... sons... The mothers... of those days... will weep because... (I solemnly tell you)... that he will be lucky... who... will be first... to fall... under the ruins. I bless you. Go... home... pray for Me. Goodbye, Jonathan... take them away »

And in the midst of the loud noise of weeping women and cursing Judaeans, Jesus sets out again.

THE NINTH STATION: JESUS FALLS A THIRD TIME

(Poem Vol. 5, pp. 597-8; Gospel Vol. 10, p. 108-9)

Longinus urges the soldiers to make haste, and striking with the flat of their daggers, they press poor Jesus to proceed. He sets out again, more and more slowly... He seems completely intoxicated - He sways so much, knocking against one line of soldiers or the other, wandering all over the road...

And immediately afterwards, the pain of the third fall, a complete one... He falls headlong - knocking His face on the uneven stones - and He remains in the dust, under the cross that falls on top of Him. The soldiers try to raise Him. But as He seems to be dead, they go and inform the centurion... Jesus comes to, and slowly, with the help of two soldiers - one of whom lifts the cross, and the other helps the Condemned One to stand up - He puts Himself in His place again. But He is really exhausted...

THE TENTH STATION: JESUS IS STRIPPED OF HIS GARMENTS

(Poem Vol. 5, pp. 605-7; Gospel Vol. 10, pp. 119-22)

(The tortuous execution procession eventually arrives at the top of Mount Calvary - its final destination...)

As soon as the condemned men are on the fatal platform, the soldiers surround the open space on three of its four sides. Only the side with the sheer drop is empty.

The centurion orders the man from Cyrene to go away. And he goes away, unwillingly...

The two robbers throw their crosses on the ground, swearing. Jesus is silent...

Four brawny men, who look like Judaeans... jump from a path onto the place of the execution... In their hands they are holding nails, hammers and ropes... The crowd is excited, with cruel frenzy.

The centurion offers Jesus the amphora, so that He may drink the anaesthetic mixture of wine and myrrh. But Jesus refuses it. The two robbers instead drink a lot of it...

The condemned men are ordered to undress. The two robbers do so without shame. On the contrary, they amuse themselves by making obscene gestures, towards the crowd...

The executioners offer the condemned men three rags, to tie round their groins. The robbers take them, uttering the most horrible curses. But Jesus, Who strips Himself slowly, because of the pangs of the wounds, refuses to take one. Perhaps He thinks that He can keep His short drawers on, which He also wore during the flagellation. But when He is told to take them off as well, He stretches out His hand, to beg for the rag from the executioners, to conceal His nakedness. He is really the Annihilated One, to the extent of having to ask for this rag, meant for criminals.

However, Mary has noticed everything, and She has removed the long, thin, white veil covering Her head under Her dark mantle, and on which She has already shed so many tears. She removes it without letting Her mantle drop, and gives it to John, so that he may hand it to Longinus, for Her Son. The centurion... gives Jesus... the veil. Jesus recognises it, and wraps it around His pelvis several times, fastening it carefully, so that it may not fall off... And on that linen veil, so far soaked only with tears, the first drops of blood begin to fall - because many of the wounds, just covered with blood-clots, have reopened again, as He stooped to take off His sandals and lay down His garments...

Jesus now turns towards the crowd. And one can thus see that also His chest, legs and arms have all been struck by the scourges. At the height of His liver there is a huge bruise, and under His left costal arch there are seven clear stripes - ending with seven small cuts, bleeding inside a violaceous circle... a cruel blow of a scourge in such a sensitive region of the diaphragm. His knees, bruised by repeated falls - that began immediately after He was captured, and ended on Calvary - are dark with hematomas; and the kneecaps are torn, particularly the right one, by a large bleeding wound.

The crowds scoff at Him in chorus: « Oh! Handsome! The most handsome of the sons of men! The daughters of Jerusalem adore You... Are You the Son of God? Certainly not. You are the abortion of Satan!... You are powerless and revolting. »

TRACK D 029

THE ELEVENTH STATION: JESUS IS NAILED TO THE CROSS

(Poem Vol. 5, pp. 607-15; Gospel Vol. 10, pp. 122-31)

(The two robbers - howling and cursing against God, the Romans and the Jews - are tied to their crosses with ropes, which cut into their wrists...)

...But no help is required for Jesus. He lies down meekly on the cross, and places His head where they tell Him. He stretches out His arms and His legs as He is told. He only takes care to arrange His veil properly. Now His long, slender white body stands out against the dark wood, and the yellow ground.

Two executioners sit on His chest, to hold Him fast... A third one takes His right arm, holding Him with one hand on the first part of His forearm, and the other on His fingers. The fourth one (who already has in his hand the long sharp-pointed quadrangular nail)... watches whether the hole already made in the wood, corresponds to the radius-ulnar joint of the wrist. It does. The executioner places the point of the nail on the wrist, he raises the hammer, and gives the first stroke.

Jesus, Who had closed His eyes, utters a cry, has a contraction because of the sharp pain, and opens His eyes, which flood with tears... The nail penetrates, tearing muscles, veins, nerves...

Mary replies to the cry of Her tortured Son with a groan, that sounds almost like the moaning of a slaughtered lamb; and She bends, as if She were crushed, holding Her head in Her hands. In order not to torture Her, Jesus utters no more cries. But the strokes continue, methodical and hard, iron striking iron...

The right hand is now nailed. They pass on to the left one. But the hole in the wood does not correspond to the carpus. So they take a rope, they tie it to the left wrist, and they pull it until the joint is dislocated, tearing tendons and muscles - besides lacerating the skin which had already been cut into, by the ropes used when He was arrested. The other hand must suffer as well, because it is stretched as a consequence, and the hole in it, widens round the nail. Now, the beginning of the metacarpus, near the wrist, hardly arrives at the hole. They resign themselves, and they nail the hand where they can, that is, between the thumb and the other fingers, just in the middle of the metacarpus. The nail penetrates more easily here, but with greater pain, because it cuts important nerves, so that the fingers remain motionless, whilst those of the right hand have contractions and tremors...

Jesus no longer utters cries - He only moans in a deep, hoarse voice, with His lips firmly closed, while tears of pain fall on the wood, then onto the ground.

It is now the turn of His feet. At two metres and more from the foot of the cross, there is a small wedge, hardly sufficient for one foot. Both feet are placed on it, to see whether it is in the right spot. As it is a little low, and the feet hardly reach it, they pull the poor Martyr's body down. So the coarse wood of the cross rubs on the wounds, and moves the crown - which tears His hair, and is on the point of falling. One of the executioners presses it down on His head again, with a slap...

Jesus, with an involuntary movement, withdraws His legs upon seeing the very long nail, which is twice as long and thick as those used for the hands... Two of the

men lean on His skinned knees, and press on His poor bruised shins, while the other two men are performing the much more difficult operation of nailing one foot on top of the other, trying to combine the two joints of the ankles...

As they hammer, and hammer, and hammer... the harsh noise of iron is accompanied by the low plaintive lament of a dove: the hoarse groaning of Mary, Who bends more and more at each stroke... Crucifixion is dreadful. Equal to flagellation with regard to pain, it is more cruel to be seen, because one sees the nails disappear in the flesh...

The cross is now dragged near the hole, and it jerks on the uneven ground, shaking the poor Crucified Christ. The cross is raised, and twice it slips out of the hands of those raising it. The first time it falls with a crash; the second time it falls on its right arm, causing terrible pain to Jesus - because the jerk that He receives, shakes His wounded limbs.

(The cross is then dropped into the hole, swaying in all directions, and shifting the poor body which hangs from three nails. This causes the nail holes to become wider, and blood to drip from them. As the cross is secured, the crown moves, its thick knot of thorns being driven into the nape of the neck, and the forehead being scratched mercilessly. And so begins the torture of being suspended.)

The robbers are also raised, shouting, as the ropes cut into their wrists, turning their hands and veins dark and swollen.

Jesus is silent, but the crowd resumes its shouting...)

Now the top of Golgotha has its trophy... At the top there is the cross of Jesus. At the sides, the other two crosses... Longinus is standing upright, between the cross of Jesus, and the one on the right. And he seems to be mounting guard of honour, for the Martyr King...

The sun... is yellow-red like a fire... Then a huge cloud of pitch rises from behind the chains of the Judae-an mountains, and soars swiftly across the sky, disappearing behind other mountains. And when the sun comes out again, it is so strong, that the eye endures it only with difficulty.

Longinus sees Mary, just under the slope, with Her tormented face raised towards Her Son. He calls one of the soldiers who are playing dice, and says to him: « If His Mother wants to come up with the son who is escorting Her, let Her come. Escort Her, and help Her. »

And Mary - with John, who is believed to be Her « son » - climbs the steps cut in the rock, passes beyond the cordon of soldiers, and goes to the foot of the cross - but a little aside - to be seen by, and see, Her Jesus.

(The crowd, the priests and the Pharisees shout abuse at both Jesus and Mary, and they then suggest that Lazarus ought to be nailed to the other side of the Cross...)

While the other women, struck with terror, run behind the shepherds, Mary Magdalene comes forward, and finding in her grief the ancient boldness of her days of

sin, she says: « Go. You will already find the soldiers of Rome in the mansion, with five hundred armed men of my land, and they will castrate you like old billygoats, destined to feed the slaves of millstones. »...

Longinus gives an order, and the fifty soldiers who were resting come into action, and they prick the buttocks of the first Judaeans they find. The latter run away, shouting... The Judaeans curse, but Rome is the stronger...

The robber on the left hand side continues to insult from his cross... (but) the other robber - who is on the right hand side with Mary almost near his feet... says: « Be silent. Do you not fear God, even now that you suffer this pain? Why do you insult Him Who is good? His torture is even greater than ours. And He has done nothing wrong. »...

(Meanwhile Jesus tries to reduce the weight on His feet, by pulling Himself up with His arms. Congestion and asphyxia increase every minute, and He licks the perspiration and blood running down His forehead. The crown of thorns prevents Him from leaning His Head back against the Cross, and His Body hangs forward, from His pelvis upwards. While the torture continues, and the unrepentant robber hurls insults at Him, Disma, the other thief, expresses remorse for his mother, and asks Mary's prayers for himself. Mary looks at him with eyes of kindness...)

Then Jesus speaks for the first time: « Father, forgive them because they do not know what they are doing! »

This prayer overcomes all fear in Disma. He dares to look at the Christ, and says: « Lord, remember me when You are in Your Kingdom. It is just, that I should suffer. But give me mercy and peace afterwards. I heard You speak once, and I foolishly rejected Your word. I now repent. And I repent of my sins before You, the Son of the Most High. I believe that You come from God. I believe in Your power. I believe in Your mercy. Christ, forgive me, in the name of Your Mother, and of Your Most Holy Father. »

Jesus turns round and looks at him, with deep compassion, and He smiles a still beautiful smile, with His poor tortured lips. He says: « I tell you: today you will be with Me in Paradise. »

The repentant robber calms down, and as he no longer remembers the prayers he learned when a child, he repeats as an ejaculation: « Jesus Nazarene, king of the Jews, have mercy on me; Jesus Nazarene, king of the Jews, I hope in You; Jesus Nazarene, king of the Jews, I believe in Your Divinity. »

TRACK D 030 & D 031

THE TWELFTH STATION: JESUS DIES ON THE CROSS

(Poem Vol. 5, pp. 615-22; Gospel Vol. 10, pp. 132-40)

For the twelfth station, there are two readings:

[The first is Jn. 19:25-30]

Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary of Magdala. Seeing his mother and the disciple he loved standing near her, Jesus said to his mother, 'Woman, this is your son.' Then to the disciple he said, 'This is your mother.' And from that moment the disciple made a place for her in his home. After this, Jesus knew that everything had now been completed, and to fulfil the scripture perfectly he said: 'I am thirsty.' A jar full of vinegar stood there, so putting a sponge soaked in the vinegar on a hyssop stick they held it up to his mouth. After Jesus had taken the vinegar he said, 'It is accomplished.'

[The second reading is Mt. 27:50-56]

Jesus, crying out in a loud voice, yielded up his spirit. At that, the veil of the Temple was torn in two from top to bottom; the earth quaked; the rocks were split; the tombs opened and the bodies of many holy men rose from the dead, and these, after his resurrection, came out of the tombs, entered the Holy City and appeared to a number of people. Meanwhile the centurion, together with the others guarding Jesus, had seen the earthquake and all that was taking place, and they were terrified and said, 'In truth this was a son of God.' And many women were there, watching from a distance, the same women who had followed Jesus from Galilee and looked after him. Among them were Mary of Magdala, Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of Zebedee's sons.

(The light is becoming strange and greenish, and Jesus, feverish and weaker, whispers:)

« Mother! Mother! »... Mary makes an unrestrainable gesture of stretching Her arms, as if She wished to succour Him. And the cruel people laugh...

It is in this frightening twilight, that Jesus gives John to Mary, and Mary to John. He lowers His head, because the Mother has gone closer to the cross to see Him better, and He says: « Woman, this is Your son. Son, this is your Mother. »...

Tears stream down Mary's cheek, notwithstanding all the efforts to restrain them - even if on Her lips there is a heartbroken smile, to comfort Him...

(As the light continues to fade, Jesus' sufferings increase. His body stiffens. His breathing becomes more difficult. And His back bends more and more forward, with the weight of His body...)

At a certain moment Jesus collapses, forward and downwards... Mary utters a cry: « He is dead! » A tragic cry that spreads in the dark air. And Jesus seems really dead...

A volley of stones and clods of earth fly towards the cross, hitting the Martyr, and falling back on the armour of the Romans...

Jesus moans pitifully, and recovers His senses... His head moves from left to right... and finding strength only in His will, Jesus stiffens on the Cross. He stands upright

as if He were a healthy man, with all his strength. He raises His face, looking with wide open eyes at the world stretched at His feet... He shouts in a loud voice... « Eloi, Eloi, lamma scabacteni! »... confessing His Father's abandonment...

People laugh and deride Him. They insult Him, saying: « God has nothing to do with You! Demons are cursed by God! »

Other people shout: « Let us see whether Elijah, whom He is calling, will come to save Him. »

The avalanches of desolate grief, which had already oppressed Him at Gethsemane, come back again... And above all... is the sensation - more crucifying than the cross itself, more despairing than any torture - that God has abandoned Him, and that His prayer does not rise to His Father...

And this final torture... crushes the remaining fibres of the heart; because it will end what the first knowledge of this abandonment has begun: in death...

Darkness becomes deeper. Jerusalem disappears completely. The very slopes of Calvary seem to vanish...

And from that light, which is no longer light, comes the plaintive voice of Jesus: « I am thirsty! »...

A soldier goes towards a jar, in which the assistants of the executioners have put some vinegar with gall, so that with its bitterness, it may increase the salivation of those condemned to capital punishment. He takes the sponge immersed in the liquid, he sticks it on a thin, stiff cane, and he offers it to the Dying Victim.

(Jesus, after greedily sucking the bitter drink, makes a wry face in disgust, withdraws, losing heart, and completely abandons the weight of His body, which leans forward on the Cross. To His faint child-like cry for His Mother, Mary replies:...)

« No, no, Son! I will not abandon You! Listen to Me, My dear... Your Mother is here, She is here... and She only regrets that She cannot come where You are... » It is heart-rending...

And John weeps openly. Jesus must hear him weep. But He does not say anything...

Longinus' face is affected - in the effort of overcoming his emotion - and his eyes begin to shine with tears that only his iron discipline can restrain...

There is dead silence. Then in utter darkness, the words: « Everything is accomplished! » are clearly heard. And His death-rattle grows louder and louder, with longer and longer pauses between one rattle and the next...

There is silence again. Then the supplication pronounced with infinite kindness, with fervent prayer: « Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit! »

Further silence. Also the death-rattle becomes fainter, It is just a breath confined to His lips and throat.

Then, there is the last spasm of Jesus. A dreadful convulsion, that seems to tear the body with the three nails from the cross. It rises three times from the feet to the head, through all the poor tortured nerves... It makes the head fall back violently once, twice, three times, hitting hard on the wood... And then a powerful cry - unimaginable in that exhausted body - bursts forth, rending

the air: the « loud cry » mentioned by the Gospels, and is the first part of the word « Mother »... And nothing else...

His head falls on His chest, His body leans forward, the trembling stops, He breathes no more. He has breathed His last.

(There is a frightening rumble. Lightning and thunderbolts descend upon the crowd, and the earth is shaken by a cyclonic whirlwind. The three crosses are violently shaken. The soldiers try not to fall, and John holds onto Mary while clinging to the Cross. The robbers howl with terror, and people fall onto one another, and into cracks in the ground. The earthquake and tornado recur three times, then quiet and darkness descend - interspersed with silent magnetic lightning, and with the fire of a burning house inside the walls of Jerusalem.

In the dim light, Mary calls for Jesus. Then as the lightning flashes, She sees Him, hanging forward...)

She stretches out Her hands in the dark air and shouts: « My Son! My Son! My Son! »...

John... embraces Mary, and tries to take Her away, saying: « He no longer suffers. »

But before the apostle finishes his sentence, Mary, who has understood, frees Herself, She turns around, She bends towards the ground, She covers Her eyes with Her hands and shouts: « I no longer have My Son! »

TRACK D 032

[For the 13th and 14 stations: Jn. 19:31-42]

It was Preparation Day, and to prevent the bodies remaining on the cross during the Sabbath – since that Sabbath was a day of special solemnity – the Jews asked Pilate to have the legs broken and the bodies taken away. Consequently the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first man who had been crucified with him and then of the other. When they came to Jesus, they found he was already dead, and so instead of breaking his legs one of the soldiers pierced his side with a lance; and immediately there came out blood and water. This is the evidence of one who saw it – trustworthy evidence and he knows he speaks the truth – and he gives it so that you may believe as well. Because all this happened to fulfil the words of scripture: Not one bone of his will be broken, and again, in another place scripture says: They will look on the other whom they have pierced. After this, Joseph of Arimathaea, who was a disciple of Jesus – though a secret one because he was afraid of the Jews – asked Pilate to let him remove the body of Jesus. Pilate gave permission, so they came and took it away. Nicodemus came as well – the same one who had come to Jesus at night-time – and he brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, weighing about a hundred pounds. They took the body of Jesus and wrapped it with the spices in linen cloths, following the Jewish burial custom. At the place where he had been crucified there was a garden, and in this garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been buried. Since it was the Jewish Day of

Preparation and the tomb was near at hand, they laid Jesus there.

TRACK D 033

**THE THIRTEENTH STATION:
JESUS IS TAKEN DOWN FROM THE CROSS**

(Poem Vol. 5, pp. 623-8; Gospel Vol. 10, pp. 142-8)

(As Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea go to Pilate, for permission to take Jesus' body down from the Cross, Longinus speaks in a low voice to John, and takes a lance from another soldier. He glances at the women who are attending to Mary, with their backs to the Cross...)

...He places himself in front of the Crucified, ponders carefully how to deal the blow, and he strikes. The lance penetrates deeply from the bottom upwards, from right to left...

« It is done, my friend » says Longinus, and he ends: « Better so. As for a knight. And without fracturing bones... He was really a Just Man! »

A lot of water, and just a trickle of blood already tending to clot, drip from the wound... The neat cut remains motionless, whereas, had there been any breathing, it would have opened and closed with the movements of the thorax and abdomen...

Longinus calls the four executioners - who are cavenly crouched under the rock, still terrorised by what has happened - and orders them to give the robbers the death-blow, with a club. This takes place without any protest by Disma, to whom the blow of the club, delivered to his knees and then his heart, interrupts - on his lips - the name of Jesus, in a death-rattle. The other robber utters horrible curses...

The four executioners would also like to deal with Jesus... But Joseph and Nicodemus (who have now returned from the Praetorium) do not allow them. Joseph takes off his mantle, and tells John to do likewise and to hold the ladders, while they climb with levers and tongs.

Mary stands up, trembling, supported by the women, as She approaches the cross.

In the meantime the soldiers, having fulfilled their task, go away. And Longinus, before descending beyond the lower open space, turns round from the height of his black horse, to look at Mary, and at the Crucified. Then the noise of the hooves resounds on the stones, and that of the weapons against the armour, and fades away in the distance.

The left palm is unnailed. The arm falls along the Body, which is now hanging semi-detached...

John, after climbing up where Nicodemus was previously, passes Jesus' arm round his neck... When the feet are unnailed, John has to make a great effort, to hold and support the Body of his Master - between the cross, and his own body.

Mary has already placed Herself at the foot of the cross, sitting with Her back against it, ready to receive Her Jesus, on Her lap.

But the unnauling of the right arm is the most difficult operation... At last the nail is seized with the tongs, and pulled out gently.

John has been holding Jesus all the time by the armpits, with His head hanging on his shoulder, while Nicodemus and Joseph get hold of Him - one at the thighs, the other at the knees - and they cautiously come down the ladders.

When on the ground, they would like to lay Him on the sheet that they have spread on their mantles. But Mary wants Him. She has opened Her mantle, letting it hang on one side, and She is sitting with Her knees rather apart, to form a cradle, for Her Jesus...

He is now in His Mother's lap... And He looks like a big, tired child who is asleep, all cuddled up in his mother's lap. Mary is holding Him with Her right arm round His shoulders, and Her left one stretched over the abdomen, supporting Him by the hips.

(Mary calls Him, caresses Him, kisses Him, and weeps on His wounds. She tidies His beard and His hair, and after stinging Herself with the thorns, She carefully removes the crown, and then begins to clean His body with Her tears, and with the veil...)

While doing so, Her hand touches the gash on His chest. Her little hand, covered with the linen veil, enters almost completely into the large hole of the wound. Mary bends to see in the dim light... and She sees. She sees the chest, torn open, and the heart of Her Son. She utters a cry. A sword seems to be splitting Her heart. She shouts, and then throws Herself on Her Son - and She seems dead, too.

They succour and console Her. They want to take Her divine Dead Son away from Her, and as She shouts: « Where, where shall I put You? In which place, safe and worthy of You? », Joseph, all bent in a respectful bow, his open hand pressed against his chest, says: « Take courage, o Woman! My sepulchre is new, and worthy of a great man. I give it to Him... But I beg You, as it is getting dark, let us proceed... It is Preparation Day. Be good, o holy Woman! »

John and the women beg Her, likewise, and Mary allows Her Son to be removed from Her lap. She stands up, distressed, while they envelop Him in a sheet. She begs: « Oh! do it gently! »

With Nicodemus and John at the shoulders, and Joseph at the feet, they lift the Corpse, enveloped not only in the sheet, but resting also on the mantles which act as a stretcher - and they set out, down the road.

Mary, supported by Her sister-in-law and by the Magdalene, goes down towards the sepulchre, followed by Martha, Mary of Zebedee, and Susanna - who have picked up the nails, the tongs, the crown, the sponge, and the cane.

On Calvary remain the three crosses, the central one of which is bare, and the other two with the bodies of the two thieves...

TRACK D 034

THE FOURTEENTH STATION: JESUS IS LAID IN THE SEPULCHRE

(Poem Vol. 5, pp. 629-41; Gospel Vol. 10, pp. 149-64)

(The small procession moves from Calvary, down to Joseph's sepulchre. Nicodemus and Joseph carry Jesus' body in, John and Mary follow, and the women disciples watch from near the opening. The two bearers uncover Jesus, and while they prepare the bandages and spices, Mary bends over Jesus, washes Him with Her tears, caresses His frozen limbs, and tries to connect His gaping wounds...)

Then She sees again the gash of the lance, which is now wide open like a mouth - as Jesus is lying on His back on the stone slab... The point of the heart can be seen distinctly, between the breastbone and the left costal arch. About two centimetres above it, there is the cut made by the point of the lance... a good centimetre and a half long, whereas the external cut on the right side is at least seven centimetres long. Mary utters a cry again, as on Calvary. A lance seems to be piercing Her, so much so that She writhes in Her pain, pressing Her hands on Her heart ...

(She kisses the wound many times, then attends to His head, tries to close His eyelids and His mouth, and disentangles His hair...)

(After an agonising and vocal lament), She straightens Herself up and says to those present in a loud voice: « ...I will stay. Close Me in here with Him. I will wait for Him. What are you saying? That it is not possible? Why is it not possible?... »

(Resisting attempts by Nicodemus and Joseph to prepare His body, She says:)

« Leave Him in the lap of His Mother. If I succeed in warming Him up, He will rise sooner. If I succeed in consoling the Father and in comforting Him for the decide hatred, the Father will forgive sooner, and He will come back sooner. » The Sorrowful Mother is almost raving...

« Do you not remember? "The Son of man is going to be handed over to the power of men, who will kill Him, but on the third day He will be raised again"... Are you shaking your heads? Are you pitying Me? Do you think that I am insane? What? He raised the dead, and will He not be able to raise Himself? »...

There is a long grave silence. Then an inhuman howl... And She shouts: « Back! Back, you cruel one! Not this revenge! Be silent! I don't want to hear you! Be silent! Ah! he is biting at My heart! »

« Who, Mother? »

« O John! It is Satan! Satan, who is saying: "He will not rise. No prophet said that". O Most High God! Help Me all of you, good spirits, and you compassionate men!... Oh! who will repeat to Me the passages that speak of My Jesus? »

It is the Magdalene, who in her melodious voice, recites David's psalm on the Passion of the Messiah...

[And Mary cries out:] « Holy Father, for the sake of this Victim, Which has been consumed, and of Me, a vic-

tim which is still consuming, give them, give the faithless, Your faith! »

(A long silence follows. The Magdalene tries to separate Mary from Her Son, and then Mary straightens up, prays, and stands back. The two preparers attend to the body, laying it on the Shroud, and covering it with the ointments and spices. Jesus finally disappears under the thick Shroud, like a long heap of cloths on the grey stone. Mary weeps louder, and relapses into a new crisis of grief. They lift Her with difficulty, and almost carry Her out of the sepulchre, into the growing darkness of the night. The heavy stone is then rolled into its lodging. But Mary desperately wants to stay beside the entrance...)

(Finally) it is the Magdalene, who finds a reason capable of bending the Sorrowful Mother to obedience. « You are good, You are holy, You believe, and You are strong. But what are we?... You are aware of it! The majority have run away. Those who have remained are trembling. The doubt, which is already in us, would overwhelm us. You are the Mother. You have not only duties and rights on Your Son, but also duties and rights on what belongs to Your Son. You must come back with us, among us, to gather us together again, to reassure us, to infuse Your faith into us... I say to You: "If we succeed in being united in the faith in His Resurrection, He will rise earlier. We will evoke Him with our love... Mother, Mother of my Saviour, come back with us, since You are the love of God, to give us this love of Yours! Do You want poor Mary of Magdala to get lost again, after He saved her with so much pity? »

« No » the Mother says, « I would be reproached for that. You are right. I must go back... and look for the apostles... the disciples... the relatives... everybody... And say...: have faith. Say: He forgives you... Whom have I already told so?... Ah! The Iscariot... I will have to... Yes, I will have to look also for him... because he is the biggest sinner... » Mary remains with Her head bent on Her breast, trembling as if She were disgusted, and then She says: « John, you will look for him. And you will bring him to Me. You must do that. And I must do that. Father, let this also be done, for the redemption of Mankind. Let us go. »

TRACK D 035

JESUS TALKS THROUGH MARIA VALTORTA TO US – OF HIS PASSION

(Poem Vol. 5, pp. 666-72; Gospel Vol. 10, pp. 195-202)

(The following is an abridged version of a dictation which Jesus gave to Maria Valtorta, after her descriptions of the Passion. He tells her of the costs, for Himself and for Mary, in suffering the tortures of being Saviours. It was with generosity, heroism, patience, meekness, perseverance and strength – that they demonstrated Their love – to save us...)

Jesus says: « You have seen My sufferings. They have been applied to make amends for your sins. No part of My body was excluded from them, because nothing in

man is free from sin... But I have come to cancel the effects of sin, with My Blood and My sorrow - washing your individual physical and moral parts - to cleanse them, and to strengthen them against culpable tendencies.

My hands were wounded and imprisoned - after they had become tired, carrying the Cross - to make amends for all the crimes committed by the hands of man... For the illicit freedom of your hands, I had Mine crucified, nailing them to the cross, depriving them of every movement...

The Feet of your Saviour, after becoming tired and bruised on the stones of the Way of My Passion, were pierced and immobilised, to make amends for the evil you do with your feet, making them the means to go to your crimes, thefts, fornications...

My Flesh was bruised, contused, torn - to punish in Me the exaggerated cult, the idolatry, that you give to your flesh and to the flesh of those whom you love... more than you love God...

My Head was tortured with countless tortures, and blows, with exposure to the sun, with shouts, and with thorns - to make amends for the sins of your minds...

To feel the crown move continuously, without being able to move My head, and not being able to lean it anywhere without being tortured! Think of what the shouts of the crowds, the blows on My head, the scorching sun were - for My tortured, aching, feverish Head! Consider what pain I felt in My poor brain, since I went to the agony of Friday, aching all over because of the efforts made on Thursday evening...

And in My Head, My eyes, My mouth, My nose, My tongue, each had their torture. To make amends for your glances, so anxious to see what is evil, and so forgetful of seeking God. To redress the too many, too false, filthy and lustful words that you utter, instead of using your lips: to pray, to teach, to console.

My nose and My tongue suffered their tortures, to make amends for your gluttony, and your sensuality of olfaction, through which you incur imperfections, which are the ground for graver sins. And you commit sins through eagerness for superfluous food, without taking pity on those who are hungry...

My organs were not exempted from suffering. Not one of them. Suffocation and cough for My lungs - contused by the cruel scourging, and suffering... because of the position on the cross. Breathlessness and heart trouble, as My heart was out of its place - and had been injured by the merciless flagellation, by the moral grief that had preceded it, by the ascent under the heavy weight of the cross, and by anaemia, the consequence of all the blood shed. My liver was congested, My spleen was congested...

The cruel bruises of My kidneys have been the most powerful chemical agent in the miracle of the Shroud... Almost crushed by the scourges, My kidneys were no longer able to work... Any doctor... will realise what sufferings the... toxins caused to Me, as they were so plentiful as to produce an indelible impression.

Thirst. What a torture is thirst! And yet you have seen it. Among so many, there was not one who gave Me a

drop of water... And fever, sunshine, heat, dust, loss of blood, made your Saviour so thirsty... I refused the wine mixed with myrrh. I did not want any lessening of My suffering... Oh! the destiny of a victim is really severe. And blessed are those who choose it as their fate.

That was the suffering of your Jesus in His innocent Body. And I will not mention the tortures of My love for My Mother, and for Her sorrow. That sorrow was required. But for Me it was the most cruel torture... She was to be there, an angel of flesh, to prevent despair from assailing Me, as the spiritual angel had prevented it in Gethsemane. She was to be there, to join Her Sorrow to Mine for your Redemption. She was to be there, to receive the investiture of Mother of mankind. But to see Her dying, at each shudder of Mine, was My greatest sorrow...

She did not curse, She did not hate. She prayed, She loved, She obeyed. Always a Mother, to the extent of thinking - among Her tortures - that Her Jesus needed Her virginal veil on His innocent body, to defend His decency...

She did not shout because Her heart was broken, but because Mine was pierced. She asked the Father the reason for that, not for Her sorrow...

Poor Mother! There was a reason... it was that men should see the Heart of God. You have seen it, Maria. And you will never forget it...

She was necessary for the dawning Church, of which a few hours previously She was created the Mother. The Church, like a new-born baby, needed the care and milk of a mother. Mary was to give it to the Church by supporting the Apostles, by speaking to them of the Saviour, and by praying for it...

Now look at the lively, delicate sensitiveness of John's behaviour... He thought of the Mother... And he went to Her. [But although he did not know that Mary was already living the tortures of Her Son]... he decided that the time had come when Jesus needed His Mother... He took Her to Him, he supported Her, he defended Her...

John possessed the love of compassion, as no other person, except My Mother, possessed it. He is the Head of those who love with such love. He is your master with regard to that. Follow him in the example he gave you - of purity and love - and you will be great.

Go in peace, now. I bless you. »
