

8 DECEMBER

THE FEAST OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

(Lk. 1:26-28) *(Audio Disc D Track 049)*

(*Poem* Vol. 1, pp. 79-82, Vol. 3, pp. 403-5; *Gospel* Vol. 1, pp. 98-101, Vol. 5, pp. 362-4;
Notebooks 1945-50, pp. 610-1)

(Maria Valorta describes a vision of Mary, at Her home in Nazareth ...)

I see Mary, a very young girl: She looks fifteen years old, at most. She is in a small rectangular room: a room most suitable for a girl. Along one of the longer walls, there is a bed: a low bed, without a bedstead. It is covered with thick mats or carpets, which appear to be laid on boards or a cane-trellis, because they are very stiff and without any curve, as is usual with our beds. Against the other wall, there is a kind of bookcase with an oil lamp, some rolls of parchment, and some needlework carefully folded (it seems to be embroidery work).

Beside the bookcase, towards the door - which opens onto the kitchen garden, and which is now covered by a curtain gently moved by a light breeze - there is the Virgin, sitting on a low stool. She is spinning some linen, which is as white as snow and as soft as silk. Her little hands - just a little darker than the linen - are whirling the spindle very quickly. Her beautiful young face is slightly bent forward, and She is smiling gently as if She were caressing or following some sweet thought.

There is a great silence in the little house and in the kitchen garden. There is a great peace - both on Mary's face, and in the surrounding place. There is peace and order. Everything is neat and tidy, and the room - although very modest looking, modestly furnished, and almost as bare as a cell - has something austere and regal about it. This is because of its cleanliness, and the care with which everything is laid: the clothes on the bed, the rolls, the lamp, and the copper pitcher near the lamp, with a bunch of branches in bloom within it.

(I do not know whether they are peach or pear branches. They are certainly branches of a fruit-tree, with pinkish white flowers.)

Mary begins to sing in a low voice, then She raises Her voice slightly. She does not sing loudly. But it is a voice vibrating in the little room, and one can perceive the vibration of Her soul in it. I do not understand the words, as they are spoken in Hebrew. But as now and again, when She repeats the word "Jehovah", I realize that it is a sacred song, perhaps a psalm. Mary is probably remembering the songs of the Temple. And it must be a happy memory because She lays Her hands in Her lap - while still holding the yarn and the spindle - and lifts Her head, which has been leaning against the wall. Her face is beautifully flushed and Her eyes are lost. I wonder what sweet thought is behind those eyes, which are shining with tears. These tears appear, but do not overflow, and they make Her eyes look larger. And yet, those eyes are smiling. They are smiling at a thought they can see, and by which Mary is abstracted from the earthly world. Mary's face is flushed and girded by the plaits She wears, rolled up like a crown round Her head. Her face seems like a beautiful flower, as it emerges from Her plain white dress.

The song changes into a prayer: "Most High Lord God, do not delay any longer in sending Your Servant to bring peace to the world. Grant us the favourable time, and the pure and prolific virgin - for the coming of Your Christ. Father, Holy Father, grant Me, Your servant, to offer My life for this purpose. Grant Me to die, after seeing Your Light and Your Justice on earth, and after knowing that our Redemption has been

accomplished. O Holy Father, send the Promise of the Prophets to the earth. Send the Redeemer to Your maidservant, so that in the hour of My death, Your abode may be opened to Me, as its gates have already been opened by Your Christ, for all those who have hoped in You. Come, come, O Spirit of the Lord. Come to the faithful who are expecting You. Come, Prince of Peace!..." Mary remains absorbed like this...

The curtain moves fast, as if someone behind it ventilated or shook it - to draw it open. And a pearl-white light, mixed with pure silver, makes the slightly yellow walls clearer, the colours of the cloths brighter, and Mary's raised face more spiritual. And in such light, while the curtain is still drawn on the mystery to be accomplished, the Archangel prostrates himself. The curtain no longer moves - it is hanging stiff against the doorposts, like a wall - separating the inside from the outside.

The Angel must necessarily take a human appearance. But it is a transhumanised appearance. Of what flesh is this beautiful and gleaming figure made? With what substance did God form it, to make it perceptible to the senses of the Virgin? Only God can possess such substances and use them so perfectly. It is a face, a body, eyes, mouth, hair and hands - like ours. But they are not our dull matter. It is a light that has taken the colour of flesh, of eyes, of hair and of lips. A light that moves and smiles, looks and speaks.

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

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

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

The angel says: "No. Do not fear. The Lord is with You! You are blessed amongst all women!"

But Mary continues to be afraid. Where has that extraordinary being come from? Is he a messenger of God - or of the Deceiver?

"Do not fear, Mary!" repeats the Archangel. "I am Gabriel, the Angel of God. My Lord has sent me to You. Do not be afraid because You have found grace in the eyes of God. And You will conceive and bear a Son, and You will call Him 'Jesus': He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High (and such He will really be). And the Lord God will give Him the throne of His Ancestor David, and He will rule over the House of Jacob for ever, and His reign will have no end.

Understand, O Holy Virgin, loved by God, Daughter blessed by Him, called to be the Mother of His Son, the Son You will generate."

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

The angel replies: "Not by deed of man You will be a mother, Mary. You are the Eternal Virgin, the Holy Virgin of God. The Holy Spirit will come upon You, and the power of the Most High will cover You with its shadow. The Child born of You will be called Holy, and Son of God. Our Lord God can do everything.

Elizabeth, the barren one, in her old age, has conceived a son, who will be the Prophet of Your Son, and will prepare His ways. The Lord has removed her disgrace, and her memory will remain amongst peoples - together with Your name.

Because the name of her creature will be joined to the name of Your Holy Son, and until the end of centuries, you will be called blessed because of the grace of the Lord has come to You both, and particularly to You, by means of Whom Grace has come to all peoples.

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

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

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

The Angel shines with joy. He kneels in adoration, because he certainly sees the Spirit of God descend upon the Virgin, who is bent down in assent. And he disappears - without moving the curtain, leaving it well drawn over the holy Mystery.

(Early in the third year of His public life, Jesus is in Nazareth, speaking with His Mother, His apostles, some relatives and some women disciples. There are some precious moments during their conversation, and Jesus reminisces about a past event...)

"...It was a clear afternoon in the month of Adar, and the trees were in bloom in the silent kitchen garden. Mary, Joseph's bride, had picked a flowery branch to replace the one that was in Her room. Taken from the Temple to adorn a house of saints, She had recently come to Nazareth. And with Her soul divided among Temple, house and Heaven, She was looking at the flowery branch, considering that by means of a similar branch... which had bloomed as if it were springtime before the Ark of the Lord... God had revealed His will to Her... And She was thinking also that on the day of their wedding, Joseph had brought Her other flowers, but never like the first one - on the thin petals of which it was written: 'I want You united to Joseph'...

She was thinking of many things... And while thinking - Her hands busy with distaff and spindle, and spinning a yam that was thinner than the hair of Her young head - She ascended to God... Moving quickly, like a shuttle on a loom, Her soul was weaving a carpet of love: from the earth to Heaven; from the needs of the house, of Joseph - to those of the soul, of God. She sang and prayed. The carpet was forming on the mystical loom, it rolled off from the earth to Heaven, and it ascended to get lost up there... Formed with what? With the thin, perfect strong threads of Her virtues, and with the flying thread of the shuttle which She thought was 'Hers', whereas it was God's. It was the shuttle of the Will of God, on which was rolled the will of the little, great Virgin of Israel, Unknown to the World, Known to God, rolled and made one with the Will of the Lord.

And the carpet was adorned with the flowers of love and of purity, with palms of peace and palms of glory, with sweet-smelling violets, with jasmines... Every virtue flowered on the carpet of love, which the Virgin of God unrolled invitingly from the earth to Heaven. And as the carpet was not sufficient, She thrust Her heart, singing: 'Let My Beloved come into His garden and eat the fruit of His trees... Let My Beloved come down to His garden, to the bed of spices, to pasture in the gardens and gather lilies. I am My Beloved's, and My Beloved is Mine. He pastures among the lilies!'

And from infinite distance, among torrents of Light, a Voice came, that human ear cannot hear, and human throat cannot utter. And it said: 'How beautiful You are,

My love! How beautiful You are!... Your lips distil wild honey... You are a garden enclosed, a sealed fountain, My sister, My promised bride...' and the two voices joined together to sing the eternal truth: 'Love is stronger than death. Nothing can quench or drown 'our' love'.

The Virgin was thus transfigured - when Gabriel descended He called Her back to the Earth with his ardour and joined Her soul to Her body again - so that She might hear and understand the request of Him, Who had called Her 'Sister' but wanted Her to be His 'Bride'.

And the Mystery took place there... A modest woman, the most modest of all women - who was not even aware of the instinctive incentive of the flesh - fainted before the Angel of God. Because even an angel upsets the humility and modesty of the Virgin, and only when She heard him speak, She calmed down, and She believed. And She said the word, whereby 'their' love became Flesh, and will defeat Death. No flood will be able to quench it, or no wickedness submerge it..."

Jesus bends gently over Mary who has slid towards His feet, almost ecstatically, in the recollection of the remote hour. She shines with a special light, which seems to issue from Her soul, and He asks Her in a low voice: "Which was Your reply, Most Pure Mother, to him who assured You that by becoming Mother of God, You would not lose Your perfect Virginity?"

And Mary, almost in a dream, slowly, smiling, Her eyes shining with joyful tears, says: "I am the handmaid of the Lord! Let it be done to Me according to your Word." And She reclines Her head on the knees of Her Son, adoring Him.

Jesus covers Her with His mantle, concealing Her from everybody's eyes, and He says: "And it was done. All will be done until the end. Until Her next transfiguration, and the one after that. She will always be the 'Handmaid of God'. She will always act according to what 'the Word' says.

My Mother! That is My Mother. And you ought to begin to become fully acquainted with Her holy Figure... Mother! Mother! Raise Your face, My Beloved... Call Your devout admirers back to the Earth, where we are for the time being..." He uncovers Mary after a little while, during which no noise is heard except the humming of bees and the gurgling of the little fountain.

Mary raises Her face, wet with tears, and whispers: "Why did You do that to Me, Son? The secrets of the King are sacred..."

And Jesus says: "But the King can reveal them whenever He wishes. Mother, I did it, so that the words of the Prophet may be understood: 'A Woman will enclose the Man in Herself'; and the words of the other Prophet: 'The Virgin will conceive and give birth to a Son'.

And I did it so that My disciples, who are struck with horror at too many things that they consider degrading for the Word of God, may have, as counterbalance, many other things, confirming them in the joy of being 'Mine'. Thus they will no longer be scandalised, and will conquer Heaven..."

(Jesus speaks to Maria Valtorta about Luke, the Gospel writer:)

Luke was patient and strong as an ox in persevering: with the full work of God for the salvation of humanity; and in investigation of the events leading up to the real apostolic activity of Christ and of his followers. This work of infinite love began with the Immaculate Conception of Mary, with the fullness of Grace granted to Her, and with continuous communion with her Lord. God, as a Father, created Her with unique perfection among all the bodies of those born to man and woman. As his most beloved Daughter, He then filled Her with his Light, the Word, who had revealed

Himself to Her in the divine, intimate lessons by which She was the Seat of Wisdom from her earliest years. As the Holy Spirit, in these early years, the Eternal Lover of the Pure poured the fires of his most perfect charity into Her. And making Her an altar and ark that was holier and more beloved than those in the Temple, He took up his repose in Her, and shone forth in the full splendour of his Glory...

The glory of the Lord always covered the Inviolable Virgin, the God-Bearing Mother, whether She halted or moved by divine orders. Such orders led Her from Nazareth to the Temple; from the Temple to Nazareth as a Virgin Bride; from Nazareth to Hebron and Bethlehem as a Virgin Mother; from Bethlehem to Jerusalem, as a support in the prophecy of Simeon; from Bethlehem to Egypt... because She was the Mother of God; to Nazareth and then to Jerusalem, leading Her to the place where the Boy was with the Doctors; from Nazareth to one place or another where the Teacher-Son was persecuted and afflicted; from Nazareth to Jerusalem and Golgotha to participate in the Redemption; and to the Mount of Olives, where the Son ascended to the Father...

Luke, unique and patient, consulted and also wrote what may be termed the introduction to the Gospel, which means "announcement", speaking to us of Our Lady of the Annunciation, without whom - and without whose absolute obedience - the Redemption would not have been carried out.

It is the property of an ox to ruminate on what was swallowed some time previously. Luke imitates the ox. Over many years, time had swallowed the preliminary episodes of the coming of the Messiah as such - that is, as Master and Saviour-Redeemer. Luke brings them back to light. He shows us the Virgin, a necessary instrument in order for us to have Jesus Christ, the God-Man. He shows us the Most Humble Woman Full of Grace: the Most Obedient One in her "Let it be done to me according to your word"; and the Most Charitable One rushing with holy swiftness to her cousin Elizabeth to comfort and help her. Though She did not have any idea about it, She was to sanctify him who was to prepare the ways for the Lord Jesus, her Son.

She was the Most Pure, and always the physically, morally, and spiritually Inviolable One...
