



CHICO XAVIER

By the spirit Neio Lucio



Jesus *in the Home*

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Translated by Tonia L. Wind and Darrel W. Kimble



International Spiritist Council

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Jesus in the Home

For most scholars, Christ is simply a historical figure who changed the course of the world's political events; for most theologians, he is simply an object of study found in the scriptures, someone who gave a new direction to the interpretations of faith; for philosophers, he is the focus of endless arguments, and for the multitude of passive believers, he is the providential benefactor during the troubling crises of everyday life.

However, when people grasp the grandeur of the Good News, they understand that the Master is not only the reformer of civilization, the lawgiver of faith, the guide for one's reasoning or the grantor of earthly favors, but, more than anything else, the renewer of everyone's life.

Upon reaching this apex of understanding, individuals love the house of worship that guides the way they live, but they do not limit themselves to conventional worship services; instead, they bring the Heavenly Friend into the family sanctuary, where Jesus begins to take control of their passions, to correct their behavior and to inspire their speech, thereby enabling followers to express his eternal teachings by means of living actions, through which the Lord intends to extend the divine kingdom of peace and love over the earth.

When the Gospel enters the home, the soul opens the door to the Divine Master more easily.

Neio Lucio understands this profound truth and has dedicated to new disciples some of the lessons of the Lord as told within the closest circle of his first apostles and followers.

Today, now that nearly twenty centuries have passed since the first fruits of the Good News, Simon's house has become the entire world...

Jesus continues to speak to disciples of all latitudes. May his incisive and gentle voice write in the book of our soul the renewing lesson we need to face the future, thereby making us active sowers of

his infinite love. Such is the greatest happiness to which we can aspire.

Emmanuel

Pedro Leopoldo, Brazil, October 3, 1949.

1

Christian Worship in the Home

The firmament was full of stars on a night of silvery moonlight, when the Lord, staying at Peter's house for the time being, picked up the Sacred Writings, and as if he wanted to set the conversation on a new course after it had become rather unproductive and unedifying, he asked kindly:

“Simon, what does the fisherman do before he goes to the market with the day's catch?”

The disciple thought for a few moments and answered somewhat hesitatingly:

“Well, of course, Master, he chooses the best fish. No one would buy the others.”

Jesus smiled and asked another question:

“And the potter? What does he do when he wants to make a piece?”

“Obviously, Lord,” replied the fisherman, intrigued, “he molds the clay and gives it the form he wants.”

With a kind-hearted and piercing look, the Heavenly Friend pressed the matter:

“And what does the carpenter do to accomplish the project he proposes?”

Simon answered very simply without hesitating:

“He planes the wood and then uses the adz, the saw, the hammer and the chisel; otherwise, he could not shape the unformed piece.”

Jesus didn't say anything for a few moments, and then explained:

“This may also be said of the home. The home is the first school and temple of the soul. The home is the true exporter of individuals for community life. If the merchant selects his merchandise, if the shipbuilder cannot build a boat without shaping the wood according to

plan, how can one hope for a safe and peaceful community unless the home becomes a better place? World peace begins under the roof that shelters us. If we can't learn to live in peace within four walls, how can nations expect to coexist in harmony? If we can't love the brother or sister right next to us, and who is involved with us in our daily struggle, how can we revere the Eternal Father who seems so far away?"

Jesus glanced around the humble room, paused briefly and continued:

"Peter, we need to shine a new light for all who might seek our fraternal assistance. In your house, the table is the place for your bread. On it you receive from the Lord the food you need each day. Around it, why not plant the seeds of happiness and peace in conversation and thought? The Father, who, by way of the soil, provides wheat for our storehouse, sends us light by way of Heaven. Just as sunlight is the diffusion of the rays that comprise it, abundance begins with the grain of seed. That is why the Gospel did not begin amongst the crowds, but rather in the simple abode of shepherds and animals."

Simon Peter gazed at the Master with humble, lucid eyes, and since he could not find the right words to explain himself, he murmured meekly:

"Master, may it be as you desire."

Then, inviting the disciple's family to join him for an edifying talk and uplifting meditation, Jesus unrolled the writings of wisdom and started the world's first Christian home worship service.

The School for Souls

The members of Simon Peter's household were gathered around Christ, listening to his gentle and persuasive voice as he commented on the sacred texts.

When the Divine Word ended his beautiful lesson, Peter's mother-in-law was troubled and asked:

"Lord, what is our life in the home supposed to be, after all?"

Jesus gazed at her questioningly, implying that he wanted her to explain herself more fully. She elaborated:

"We begin the endeavor amongst flowers, only to find ourselves gathering a bunch of thorns later on. At first, there is the promise of peace and understanding; however, stones and troubles soon appear."

Seeing that the Galilean woman was on the verge of tears, Jesus responded quickly:

"The home is a school for souls; the temple where divine wisdom gradually enables us to understand humankind more fully."

He smiled and asked:

"What do you do first with lentils before serving them at mealtime?"

The woman responded hesitantly:

"Well, of course, Lord, I have to put them on the stove and cook them long enough. Then, I have to season them in order to make them taste good."

"And would you, perchance, serve raw dough at the table?"

"Of course not," responded the humble old woman. In order to make it edible, I would have to bake it in the oven. Otherwise..."

The Divine Friend then considered:

"In heaven, too, there is a festive banquet, where our sentiments must serve the Father's glory. Most of the time, the home is a holy

cauldron or the preparatory oven. What may seem to us like affliction or suffering in the home is actually a resource for the spirit. The soul that is awakened to the Lord's Will receives the most enlightening blessings from its renewing struggles, because only by living with others in the home, by studying aspirations and inclinations unlike our own, and by observing the defects of others and putting up with them, can we learn to overcome our own imperfections. Haven't you ever noticed how quickly a person's life passes by? The life of the body is much like that of a flower. In the morning it emits a fragrance; at night it withers ... The home is a brief course on the fraternity we will enjoy in the life eternal. The suffering and natural conflicts within its walls are lessons."

Simon's mother-in-law listened carefully to all this and then remarked:

"But Lord, there are persons who struggle and suffer, but they never learn."

Christ rested his very lucid eyes on her and asked again:

"What do you do with the hard lentils that do not yield to the action of the heat?"

"Ah! Of course, I toss them into the garbage because they might hurt the mouth of the careless yet trusting person at the table."

"The same thing happens to the soul who rebels against the spiritually constructive lessons of the home," finished the Master. "The struggles of everyday life keep the soul stirred up to its benefit; however, when death arrives on the scene – that great selector of spirits as provisions for the storehouses of Our Father – souls who did not yield to the sanctifying heat, who kept themselves in the same hardened state as when they were first led to the blessed oven of the body, will be tossed out, and for an indeterminate time, they will be like fertilizer in the detritus of nature."

3

Explanations by the Master

In the middle of an uplifting conversation in the pleasant confines of Peter's home in Capernaum, Sarah, the wife of Benjamin (who raised goats), had been listening to the Master's remarks. With a look of fascination in light of the new revelations, she asked:

"The notion of the Kingdom of God in our lives is truly sublime; but how can I begin to experience it? We have listened to you preaching on the lakeshore, and we know that the Good News recommends love and forgiveness above all else ... I would love to be faithful to such principles, but I feel stuck in the old rules. I can't forgive those who have injured me, and since I can't fathom a life in which we trade our advantages for the sake of others, I'm attached to my things and am jealous of everything I own."

Sarah made her confession honestly in spite of the frustrated smile of someone who has met with almost insurmountable obstacles.

"In order to forgive," remarked Peter, "goodwill is crucial."

"With faith in our Heavenly Father," offered Simon's wife, "we can surmount the hardest obstacles."

Everyone present had a look of longing expectation, wondering what the Lord would have to say. After a long silence, he asked:

"Sarah, what is the fundamental business of your family?"

"Raising goats," she replied curiously.

"How do you keep their milk untainted and pure for home use?"

"Lord, more than anything else, we have to very carefully wash the container that is going to hold it. If there is any dirt in the jar, all the milk will soon go sour and will be useless for the slightest purpose."

Jesus smiled and explained:

"Thus is the heavenly revelation within the human heart. If we do not purify the container of the soul, our understanding, no matter how

great it is, gets mixed in with our inner dirt and goes sour, reducing the proportion of the assets we would otherwise collect. In fact, Moses and the prophets were priceless bearers of divine messages, but the descendants of the Chosen People did not purify the living receptacle of their spirits enough in order to receive them. That is why our contemporaries are righteous and unrighteous, believing and disbelieving, good and evil at the same time. The pure milk of higher enlightenment enters their hearts as new nourishment, but there it gets mixed in with the rust of their old selfishness. Of the renewing work of the soul, only the vinegar of incomprehension remains, thereby delaying the effective work of the Kingdom of God.”

The small gathering in Peter’s home was truly impressed by this simple yet sublime lesson, and no one said a word.

The Master, however, got up humbly and discreetly, stroked Sarah’s hair and concluded kindly:

“The dew on a white lily is a heavenly diamond, but in the dust of the road it becomes a muddy droplet. Remember this simple and clear truth of nature.”

4

The Lesson of the Seed

Because his listeners were perplexed, Jesus spoke convincingly:

“It really is very difficult to overcome the troubling cares of human life. Everywhere we look, we see war, misunderstanding, injustice and suffering. In the Temple – the Lord’s House – we see the rich displaying pride and vanity, and the poor, hatred and rebelliousness; it is not always possible to have as pure and clean of a heart as might be desired, because we are surrounded by thorns, mire and serpents. However, the idea of the Divine Kingdom is just like a tiny grain of wheat: it is nearly imperceptible when it is sown in the ground, and it has to bear detritus and the weight of the soil; nonetheless, if it does sprout, neither the pressure nor impurities of the soil can stop its progress. It passes up through the dark ground, and although it takes most of its nutrients from it, its drive to seek the light above holds sway. From then on, come rain or shine, day or night, it labors tirelessly to grow, and in its eagerness, it multiplies for the good of all. Disciples who have felt this inner drive – as happens to the grain of wheat – know that long roots hold them to earthly inhibitions ... They know that malice and suspicion shadow their footsteps, that pain is a constant threat; even so, they feel, more than anything else, the drive to grow spiritually and they can no longer be held back. On behalf of the general good, they continue to act within the sphere in which they are making their pilgrimage. They no longer encounter irresistible temptations amongst the flowers along the way. The reencounter with the Divinity – whose heir they recognize themselves to be – is their unwavering goal, and they can no longer rest, as if a consuming and flaming light were tormenting their soul. Without even realizing it, they produce the fruits of hope, goodness, love and salvation, because they never look back to count the blessings of which they were the

faithful instruments. Seeing the Father is the overriding concern vibrating in the souls of these longing children.”

The Master didn't say anything for a few moments and then concluded:

“As a result, even though disciples' feet remain stuck in the mire of the earth, their untiring work for the good – wherever they may be – is the unmistakable mark of their spiritual growth. We can recognize trees by their fruit and we can identify heaven's workers by the services they render.”

At this point, Peter interrupted and asked:

“Lord, what, then, would you say about those who understand the sacred principles of charity but do not put them into practice?”

Jesus looked pleased and explained:

“These, Simon, are seeds that lie dormant in spite of having been sown in the bountiful bosom of the earth. They contain the precious qualities of heaven, but they remain useless for a long time. Nevertheless, we may be absolutely certain that downpours and tempests will pass over them and will change their position in the soil, and that they will sprout victorious some day. In our Father's fields there are millions of such souls awaiting the renewing storms of life so that they may head toward the glory of the future. Let us help them with love, and in our turn, let us press on with our eyes fixed ahead!”

Then, while everyone was silent, Jesus blessed the little family group and left.

5

The Inconstant Worker

The Master was seated before the entire group and began telling a simple story:

“A certain man encountered the light of Divine Revelation and felt a burning desire to live among the Angels of Heaven.

“He begged the Father so much for this blessing, that, through inspiration, the Lord handed him over to the perfecting process that would lead him to his proposed goal.

“By means of several friends, guided by Divine Power, the aspirant, who displayed a remarkable bent for sculpture, was led to work in precious marble with an old master. However, he quit shortly thereafter, claiming that he couldn’t submit himself to such a gruff and intractable man. Hence, he moved on to a workshop where wooden implements were produced under the guidance of an old craftsman. But he also abandoned this line of work before long, alleging that he was unable to bear the old man. Next, he was employed under the supervision of a well-known worker specializing in building Greek columns, but it wasn’t long before he left that job too, stating that he couldn’t handle the demands. Soon thereafter, he went to work for an experienced builder of festive arches, but at the end of one week, he forsook his commitments there, stating that he found his boss to be too impetuous and irritable. From there, he went to work for a maker of fancy chests, but he left after a few days under the pretext that the man was an inhumane and cruel individual.

“Thus, from job to job, from workshop to workshop, the aspirant to Heaven invariably stated that he couldn’t mold his energies to the earthly experience, because everywhere he went he encountered error, malice and persecution in those who guided him. Finally, death came and whisked him off to the Angels of the Lord.

“However, he was surprised that he was not greeted by the smiles he had expected. One of the angels approached him sadly and asked: ‘Friend, why didn’t you prepare yourself according to the mandates of Heaven?’

“Realizing his unworthiness because of the darkness that enveloped him, the man tearfully complained that he had found only exigency and hardness in the leaders of the human struggle.

“The messenger, however, remarked with pity: ‘The Father called you to work on your own behalf, and not to judge others. Everyone will give an accounting of themselves to God. No one will escape the Divine Justice that is rendered at the precise moment. How could you have forgotten such a simple truth during your life? The hammer strikes the anvil, the blacksmith uses the hammer, the merchant inspects the blacksmith’s work, the people voice their opinion of the merchant, and the Lord analyzes and judges all of them. If you avoided the little jobs of the world, alleging that those men were incapable and unworthy of leading, how will you be able to understand heavenly service?’

“And the inconstant worker went on to suffer the consequences of his thoughtless downfall.”

Jesus paused and then concluded:

“Those who are under the control of individuals who are strict disciplinarians will achieve excellent results if they can take advantage of their severity, like a piece of unformed wood under the touch of the beneficial plane. Blessed is the hand that instructs and corrects, but even more blessed are they who allow themselves to be shaped under its renewing and perfecting touch, because the masters of the world always object to learning from other masters, but the work of the good, when accomplished by all, remains forever.”

6

The Tools of Perfection

That night, Simon Peter joined the conversation with his spirit vexed with great discouragement.

He had been offended by insensitive, ill-mannered relatives.

An elderly uncle had accused him of wasting family assets and a cousin had threatened to box his ears right there on the street.

So, he was wearing a burdened and austere face.

After the Master read a few lines from the Sacred Writings, the fisherman opened up. He described the conflict with his kin while Jesus listened in silence.

When he had finished his lengthy, earnest report, the Lord asked him:

“What did you do, Simon, in response to your inconsiderate relatives’ onslaught?”

“Well, of course, I reacted like I should have!” the disciple answered vehemently. “I put them both in their proper place. I didn’t hold back in pointing out their bad qualities. My uncle is a rare example of stinginess and my cousin is a consummate liar. In front of a large crowd I showed that both were hypocrites, and I’m not at all sorry for it.”

The Master thought for several moments and then began to speak compassionately:

“Peter, what does a carpenter do when he is building a house?”

“Well, of course, he works hard on it,” Peter answered impatiently.

“How?” replied the Heavenly Friend with a smile.

“With tools.”

After Simon’s terse response, Christ continued:

“The individuals we are born and live with while on the earth are the first and most important tools that we have received from the

Father for building the Kingdom of God within us. They are elements for our spiritual growth, and if we fail to take advantage of them, it is nearly always impossible to be victorious by using other means, because the Father has bestowed life's problems on us according to our ability to solve them. The bird has to build a nest, but nothing else is expected of it. The sheep provides wool to the shepherd, but no one expects a ready-made coat from it. People have been granted tasks such as those entailing love and humility as they work intelligently and constantly for the common good so that peace and happiness may not be only myths. Our closest family members are most often the hammer or saw we can use in building the living and sublime temple by which Heaven will manifest in our soul. While the mason uses his tools on the outside, it is up to us to use ours on the inside. On every occasion, unlearned persons represent for us an arena of spiritual merit; the bad person is a challenge that puts our goodness to the test; the ungrateful person is a way for us to practice forgiveness; the sick person is a lesson in our ability to lend aid. Those who behave rightly in the Father's name with respect to difficult or indifferent family members are quickly preparing themselves for the glory of serving humankind, because patience perfects life and time changes everything."

Jesus finished, and perhaps because Peter's eyes still had a beseeching look, he added serenely:

"If we do not help the needy person who is right there beside us, how can we help afflicted persons who are far away? If we do not love the brother or sister who breathes the same air with us, how can we devote ourselves to the Father in Heaven?"

In light of these questions, no one dared break the expressive silence that hung in the air of that modest room in Capernaum.

The Greatest Servant

Philip was at the family meeting, and at one point he asked the Divine Master:

“Lord, of all the people on the earth, who is the greatest servant of the Father?”

Jesus thought for a few moments and then began telling this story:

“A large crowd gathered in a big field when a famous warrior bearing swords and medals came there to give lessons on military tactics, urging the onlookers to learn how to defend themselves. The people began doing strenuous exercises, leaping and running dangerously about to no real purpose; even so, they kept at it, aimlessly and joylessly. Consequently, they lost several young men in such activities as they prepared for the possibility of war. Not long thereafter, a famous politician arrived in the region with a large collection of law codes. He divided the people into various parties, pitting young against old, poor against rich, and servants against stewards. In spite of the sowing of material benefits as a result of the competition amongst the various groups, the politician went on his way, leaving behind dark thorns of hatred, disappointment and discord amongst his collaborators. After the politician came a philosopher carrying volumes of old books under his arm. He divided the people into various schools of thought, which soon gave rise to pointless arguments amongst them. Everyone doubted everything – even their own existence. The philosophy, of course, had remarkable advantages. It did stimulate thinking, but the trouble resulting from it was very regrettable, and the philosopher bequeathed a lot of futile questions to minds incapable of such a lofty effort. Next came a priest armed with vestments and symbols; he supplied a lot of rules and regulations on how to worship the Father. The people learned to genuflect, to cleanse

themselves and to plead for divine protection at set times. Nonetheless, all the fundamental problems of the community remained the same.

“There were no work directives, no conscious purpose, no values, no happiness throughout the entire realm. Disease and death, need and ignorance haunted everyone.

“One day, a humble man showed up. He brought no weapons, scriptures, arguments or symbols; he brought only a spontaneous smile that revealed a mind full of good will guiding his industrious hands. He preached no spectacular doctrines; instead, through gestures of pure and constant kindness, he rendered true worship to the Almighty. He began to make himself known, cultivating a small plot and decorating it with precious fruits and flowers. He talked with his companions-in-struggle, making use of the time in fraternal, spiritually uplifting teaching, and he told of his experiences to all who had a mind to listen to him. He worked with wood, planted useful trees, built houses and set up a modest school. Soon, everyone around him was living in health and peace, fraternity and the blessings of work, prosperity and contentment with life. Due to the spirit of work and learning that he instilled, defense was good, politics helpful, philosophy worthwhile and the priesthood useful, because all of the community’s activities were now presided over by the holy imperative of carrying out one’s personal duties for everyone’s benefit.”

Christ fell silent, but no one in the small group dared ask any questions.

After gazing at the far-off horizon for a long time in silent thought, the Master finished:

“In fact, there are many workers who deserve the blessings of Heaven because of the good they bring to people’s body and mind, but those who educate the eternal spirit by teaching and serving stand above all others.

8

The Wise Prince

The disciples were discussing the most appropriate way to act before the Almighty, when the kindhearted Master told the following tale:

“There was once a king who ruled over a vast realm. Wanting to broaden his sons’ minds in order to bestow a worthy inheritance on them, he took them to one of his huge domain’s lush green and abundant valleys and entrusted each one of them with a particular plantation, which they were to care for and cultivate with diligent work. Their father wanted them to have the crown of understanding, love and wisdom, which they could attain only through education and work. And since he was to give them transitory material, he set an amount of time for their constructions that would be vital for their important tasks later on. He did this because the valley was subject to changes and a time would come when a devastating storm would visit the region, and only those who had built a sturdy shelter would be safe. Now as soon as the king left, his young sons, along with the many clans accompanying them, lazed around for long periods of time, seduced by the beauty of the sun-drenched plains. When they did get up to work, they indulged in long discussions on the laws of solidarity, justice and defense, with each of them demanding special deference from the others. Almost no one was concerned about enforcing the rules and regulations that had been established by the central government. Concerned about their personal comfort, most of the princes and their cronies were meticulous in finding subtle ways to evade, without causing a scandal, the principles to which they had sworn to obey and respect. Trying to deceive their Magnanimous Father through mere words of praise instead of honoring him with beneficial work, they restricted themselves to complex disputes regarding the king’s

personal issues.

“They wasted years on end arguing about his personal appearance. Some of them insisted that his face was white as a lily, while others insisted that it was tan, like that of many slaves from Sidon. Many said that he had a gigantic body, and a lot of them insisted that he was a star-crowned angel.

“Whilst the verbal confrontations increased in number, time slowly ticked away and endlessly-reproducing, ravaging insects invaded the land, wiping out a sizable part of their invaluable resources. Pollutants came down from nearby mountain ranges and turned the area into a wasteland. Meanwhile, completely distracted from their basic obligations, the thoughtless princes were constantly ensnared in foolish quarrels.

“However, there was one well-informed son who took note of his father’s decrees and strove to uphold them. He never forgot the king’s advice and whenever possible, he would offer it to his closest friends. He spent many hours, to which he was entitled by law to use for rest, building a sturdy shelter that would assure him peace of mind in the future, and sowing beauty and happiness around the plantation that his father had loaned him.

“And so, when the renewing and violent storm finally appeared, the wise prince, who had loved the king and had zealously and devotedly served him by spreading his liberating lessons out of pure fraternity, and by fulfilling his fair and kind will through daily work by means of the constructive afflictions of his soul and the sweat of his brow, was naturally sheltered in a sanctuary of peace and safety that his squabbling brothers were unable to find.”

A gentle silence hung over the simple room...

After a few minutes, the Master set his clear eyes on the small group and concluded:

“Those who spend too much time analyzing things without demonstrating the spirit of service can easily become addicted to talking too much, but none will feel remorse for having taught the good and for having worked with their own hands in the name of the Heavenly Father on the blessed pathway of life.”

The Messenger of Love

During the meeting, everyone was discussing the predominance of wise men on the earth, when Jesus calmly and simply began to recount a story:

“Many years ago, when the world was in grave danger due to a calamitous crisis of ignorance and wickedness, the Almighty Father sent it a messenger of knowledge, whose mission it was to deliver the glorious message of life eternal. Upon taking human form in the physical realm, the learned worker became a teacher, and greatly interested in literature, he fell in love with intellectual works exclusively and distanced himself in disgust from the unlearned crowds, believing that he was living on the enlightened vanguard, which was inaccessible to the understanding of ordinary folk. When the Merciful Lord saw that the man was unable to live up to his commitments, he arranged for the visit of another messenger of knowledge who after some time became a revered doctor. This new herald of Providence took refuge in a room full of herbs and medicinal brews, only showing an interest in helping important patients who were able to pay him handsomely and stating that common folk were too broke to be of interest to him. So, the All-Caring Father decided to send yet another messenger of knowledge, but this one became a famous warrior. He used his sword of reckoning with great skill; he sided with cunning and vengeful men; and shunning the meek and poor, he stated that the only purpose for such people was to point to the glory of bloodthirsty conquerors. Saddened by so much failure, the Supreme Lord sent yet another missionary of knowledge who soon became an excellent musician. He confined himself to rich and lavish halls, composing music that intoxicated ephemerally happy people’s hearts with pleasure, and vowed that the populace would not seduce

his abilities, which he believed to be exceptionally advanced for his time.

“It was then that the Sublime Father, again worried by such failures, ordered a messenger of love to be sent to humankind.

“With great mercy this messenger was able to reach the four corners of the world. He felt compassion for the teacher, the doctor, the warrior and the musician to the same extent that he felt mercy for the misfortune and primitiveness of the crowds. Determined to work in God’s name, he became the diligent servant to all. He began to work for the common good, and identifying with the people to whom he had come to serve, he forgave infinitely and repeated the same effort or the same lesson a thousand times over. If he was humiliated or persecuted, he tried to see the offense as a beneficial challenge to his ability to perform regenerating deeds so that he could bear witness to his trust in the Father who had sent him. In order to love his brothers and sisters in struggle without holding back, many times he was compelled to pray for help from Heaven when faced with the claws of slander and sarcasm; nonetheless, he found in the lowest of manifestations of human nature even more reasons to dedicate himself with more fervor to better his fellow beings, who had yet to come to know the grandeur and sublimity of the Benevolent Father who had given them life.

“Thus it was that, by making himself the least of all, he was able to light the renewing flame of faith and pure kindness in the hearts of earthly creatures, uplifting them to the highest level, thereby winning a complete victory in the divine mission to which he had been entrusted.”

There was a slight pause in the sweet words of the Messiah, and in light of the calm that had spontaneously come over the noisy room of a few minutes ago, he concluded with an expressive tone in his voice:

“Education and sanctification represent inseparable forces of the spirit’s glory. Knowledge and love are the two wings of the angels that have reached for the Divine Throne. But far and wide, those who love are far ahead of those who merely know.”

The Reformed Judge

Since, during his teaching that day the Lord had suggested a great deal of caution when passing judgment, the disciples' conversation at Peter's house involved that very issue.

"It's hard not to criticize," said Matthew sincerely, "because regularly educated people constantly have to voice their opinions as they go about their daily activities."

"Yes," agreed Andrew openly, "it's not easy to do the right thing without analyzing all the details."

After listening to a number of statements regarding the right to observe and correct, Jesus intervened unpretentiously:

"Of course, no one can fulfill the task to which they have been assigned in the divine plan of life unless they keep an eye on the path they are on by following the principles of righteousness. However, we must not incline our mind to the follies of the sentiments, so that we do not fall prey to our own impulses. We will be judged by the same measure that we use on others. Severity is answered with severity, patience with patience, kindness with kindness."

After a few moments, he continued:

"At the time when Israel was ruled by the great judges, there lived an austere and impetuous judge in the great city of the chosen people. He brought dread and cruelty to all of those who served under his rule. Abusing the powers that had been bestowed upon him, he created tyrannical laws for punishing the smallest infractions. He added a huge number of soldiers, built many prisons and invented numerous instruments of torture.

"Stifled by these strange prohibitions, the people lived under a harsh, watchful eye as though they were just a bunch of unruly animals. They had to work, rest and worship the Lord at times that

were strictly set by the government, or risked being subjected to humiliating punishment in prison and to having to pay all sorts of heavy fines.

“The judge may have been ruthless but his subordinates were even more so due to their own innate wickedness.

“Now it just so happened that when, in the middle of the night, the judge was on his way to visit one of his sons who was sick, he was taken prisoner without any respect whatsoever by a group of drunk guards who were unaware of the fact that the man they were leading to the dungeon was the very one who had opened it just a few weeks before. It did him no good to tell them who he was or to point out the honorable insignias of his office. Believing him to be a dreaded thief, they shackled him, stripped him of his belongings, and beat him mercilessly, stating that they were acting in accordance with the instructions of the great judge – who in actuality was him.

“It was not until the following day that the mistake was righted, after the miserable public figure had already suffered the punishment that his authority had established for everyone else.

“It was only then that the wretched lawgiver saw how dangerous it was to give power to cruel and ignorant subordinates, and he finally realized that constructive and blessed justice is the kind that corrects by helping and educating others in preparation for the Kingdom of Love amongst all peoples.

“After that particular event, the city took on a whole new life because, although the reformed judge was still conscientious about his job, he had erected over his court the heart of an understanding and loving father for the good of all.”

Outside the stars were shining, portrayed in the serene waters of the large lake. After a long pause, the Master concluded:

“Only those who have learned a great deal in life through study and service, sweat and tears, as they strive to uphold the good amid the thorns of self-denial and the flowers of love, are fit to carry out justice in the Father’s name.”

The Disillusioned Saint

The discussion at the humble home in Capernaum had leaned towards matters having to do with devotion, when the Master spoke in a meaningful tone of voice:

“A venerated devotee withdrew for good to a secluded cave in the middle of the forest under the pretext of serving God. There he lived in the midst of his prayers and thoughts, which he deemed irreprehensible. The people believed him to be a holy messiah and came to revere him with an inexpressible amount of respect. If someone wanted to involve himself in any type of business, he was quick to ask the devotee’s opinion on the matter. Obsessed with such consideration, the believer, who had stagnated in effortless worship, believed that everyone should do as he was doing, with the respectable excuse of getting to heaven.

“If an active and trusting person asked him what he thought about a certain business plan, he would reply angrily:

‘That would be wrong. Get rid of the thirst for profit that boils in your veins. It is nothing but sinful ambition. Come and pray, and forget about greed.’

“If this or that young person came to ask for his thoughts on marriage, he would rant, all upset:

‘That’s nonsense. The flesh is overpowering your spirit. Marriage is lechery. Come and pray; destroy your sin.’

“When someone came to ask for his advice about a certain high-ranking position in the public administration, he would exclaim with great compassion:

‘That would spell disaster. Rid yourself of the passion for power. It is pure vanity and pride. Come and pray; overcome such evil thoughts.’

“When a good-intentioned person came to ask for his opinion

about planning a party for some friends, he would object angrily:

‘That would be a calamity. The joy of the people is chaos. It lacks order. Come and pray; keep yourself had from such a temptation.’

“And so, in light of the immense authority that the saint enjoyed, his consultants would become inconsolably sad and would begin to spend their free time alone with an utterly paralyzed soul.

“But time – which changes all things – brought death to the lazy worshipper’s physical body.

“All of his followers were sure that he had been carried off to Heaven, and he himself had believed that from the grave he would go straight to paradise. But to his utter horror, he was led by the forces of darkness to the terrible purgatory of murderers. Sobbing desperately in light of this unexpected affliction, he asked why his spirit had been sent to such a frightful and hellish whirlpool. He was told that even though he had not actually been a common murderer while on earth, here he was regarded as a murderer of the courage and hopes of hundreds of his fellow humans.”

Jesus fell silent, but John, who was very touched by the story, considered:

“Master, I would never have thought that excessive devotion could lead someone to such great misfortune!”

But Christ responded impassively:

“Let us plant belief and confidence in others, understanding, however, that each person has the path that is proper for them. Faith without works is an unlit lamp. We must never forget that the act of discouraging others in the blessed adventures of the good is one of the greatest sins before the Almighty and Compassionate Lord.”

The Four Tests

After reading a few passages from the story of Job, the discussion at Simon's house switched to the soul's faithfulness to the Almighty Father.

In response to the expression of joy radiating on everyone's faces, Jesus told them the following story:

"In the old city of Nineveh, there was a man who was so deeply devoted to God that all of his contemporaries held him in particularly high esteem. The praises for his behavior were so lavish that news about it rose up to the Eternal's Throne. Now, because several archangels were asking the Almighty to bring him back to Heaven, the Divine Wisdom gave the order for him to be sought out in the jungle of the flesh in order to determine if he was, in fact, prepared for such a sublime investiture.

"In order to do so, the Teacher Angels working for The Most High sent four basic detectors of righteous individuals – Want, Wealth, Power and Anger each came down in its own time in order to perform the indispensable trials.

"Want, which is always first to appear in such cases, approached the great believer and made its presence felt in a number of different ways by afflicting him with hardships, obstacles, illnesses and abandonment by loved ones; however, the devout man, full of confidence, knew that the messenger was a heavenly worker and defeated it, proving himself to be increasingly stronger in the virtues of which he had become a model.

"Then it was Wealth's turn. It approached the man and granted him a lavish table, vast resources and all types of social considerations; but the foresightful disciple remembered charity, and distancing himself from the temptation of easy pleasures, he distributed his

money and possessions through a number of good deeds; thus, he achieved financial stability and everyone's admiration.

“Having proven victorious in the second trial, it was Power's turn, which invested him with broad, illustrious authority. The devout man, however, remembered that life, with all its honors and gifts, is merely a loan from Heavenly Providence, and he carefully made use of his power by teaching all those around him through instruction and well-guided work, receiving in exchange the obedience and admiration of the people amongst whom he had been born.

“Triumphant and happy, the believer was finally visited by Anger. In order to probe his spiritual state, the invisible teacher made use of a weak and unlearned servant to touch his self-esteem by talking with obvious disregard about a private matter. Although what he said was, in fact, true, it constituted real disrespect toward anyone of such a social position and inarguable dignity.

“The devout man could not help himself. An intense wave of blood spread across his flushed face and he lost control of himself by hurling hurtful words, wounding family members and servants and undermining everything he had done. It took him a number of days to regain his composure, but by then Anger had already laid bare his inner spirit, showing that he still had a lot of work to do. Anger notified the Lord that this particular son, enrolled in the school of illumination, still had a long way to go in the purifying experience in order to earn a position in the glorious vibrations of the higher life.”

A look of curiosity appeared on everyone's faces, and no one dared to broach a new subject. Smiling serenely, Christ concluded:

“When people receive all of the information they need to qualify for Heaven, the Loving Father then looks to see if they have been exposed to the instructive powers. The majority of believers lose their apparently good standing when Want begins testing their moral strength. Many become corrupted by the suggestions of Wealth, which makes note of their detachment from inferior objectives and their ability to act in sowing the good. Others fall disastrously due to the insinuations of Power, which tries them to test their ability to instruct and protect their companions of the human journey. Very rare are those who can triumph over an unexpected visit from Anger, which comes into persons' lives to see if they have overcome their vanity; if not, their spirit cannot reflect the splendor and grandeur of the Creator

in the realm of life eternal.”

The master fell silent, smiled compassionately once again, and since no one had anything more to say, that evening’s meeting came to a close.

The Sincere Revolutionary

During a discussion on domestic matters, Judas had been speaking enthusiastically about irregularities in the governance of the people and the likelihood of an uprising in Jerusalem, when the Lord very calmly added his comments:

“A king in ancient times was regarded by the people of his realm as being so cruel that the head prophet of the kingdom was called upon to lead a widespread rebellion to try to dethrone him.

“At first, the prophet did not believe the people’s accusations, but everyone was adamant. ‘The king has a heart of stone and is an evil lord because he persecutes, seizes and beats his subjects all over the kingdom,’ they complained in desperation.

“Thus it was that the trusting prophet likewise became enraged and accepted the idea of a revolution being the only remedy to the situation, so he made plans in private with a few hundred resolute and courageous companions. However, since he had an unwavering trust in God, on the eve of the event he went up on top of a mount and prayed so fervently for divine assistance that an Angel from Heaven was sent down to have a heart to heart talk with him.

“In the company of the sublime messenger the prophet accused the king, alleging what he knew by hearsay and beseeching heaven’s approval of the plan for the renewing revolt.

“The messenger noted his sincerity, listened to him patiently and then said, ‘In the name of the Supreme Lord, the plan will be approved under one condition: You must live with the king for one hundred days in his palace as a humble and loyal servant. At the end of this time, if your mind is still set on the same intent, you can overthrow the throne with our support.’

“The honest leader accepted the proposal and began to fulfill the

terms.

“Humble and sincere, he went to the royal abode, where there were always cleaning positions available, and took the job of an unknown servant. But as soon as he began serving the king, he noticed that the king never had time for the smallest needs having to do with the pleasures of life. From the moment he got up in the morning, he was surrounded by impertinent advisors and ministers; he was tormented by hundreds of complaints by the hour. In his role as a father, he was deprived of his children’s affection; in his role as a husband, he lived far from his wife. In addition, he often suffered ill health because he had to attend to a lot of banquets and ceremonies where he was forced to listen to all kinds of lies coming from the mouths of flattering and ungrateful subjects. He never slept, nor did he eat at the right time each day, and wherever he was, he had to watch what he said – he could never open his heart to express any lasting expression of life, but had to suppress any such feelings, which in turn suffocated his soul.

“The leader of the popular masses realized that the king was more like a slave, heartlessly condemned to labor without rest in complete spiritual loneliness – he couldn’t even find time to enjoy communion with God through ordinary prayer.

“By the end of the time period agreed upon, the prophet had undergone a dramatic transformation and returned to the mount in order to honor his promise. When the Angel appeared to him as he was praying, he implored him to have mercy on the king, for whom he now felt a sincere sense of compassion. Immediately afterwards, he gathered the people and notified all his co-conspirators that the king was perhaps the most tortured man in the entire kingdom, and that instead of their long-awaited insurrection, they should show more understanding and work harder at their jobs so that the king – who was himself so enslaved and miserable – could, without trouble, fulfill the lofty mission that had been bestowed upon him.

“And so, the rebellion gave way to understanding and hard work.”

Judas was disappointed and seemed to be rehearsing some kind of irreverent comment, but the Divine Master spoke first, saying incisively:

“Revolution is always the tragic error of those who wish to usurp the scepter of government. When every servant understands their

responsibilities in the plan of life, there is no disposition toward rebelliousness or time for insubordination.”

The Crown and the Wings

During the meeting, they were discussing the glories of knowledge, when, to illustrate, Christ humbly narrated the following story:

“Having been told that intellectual development could lead one to divine understanding, a truth-loving man decided to launch himself toward the top of the mountain of knowledge, using all the forces he could muster in the decisive undertaking. The pathway was overcast like a dark labyrinth. However, overlooking every hardship and danger, the tireless fighter pressed on, changing his attire as he went along in order to better meet the demands of the climb. From time to time, he would cast aside a tunic that had become too tight, or a sandal that seemed to have become useless. He continued making use of new pieces of clothing until one day, many years later, he reached the top of the mountain, where one of God’s representatives came to see him.

“The emissary greeted him, embraced him and adorned his brow with a dazzling crown of light. But when the champion of knowledge wanted to proceed on the path to Heaven, the messenger recommended that he retrace his steps in order to see the path he had traveled, because from this review it would be determined whether or not he should be granted the wings that would enable him to fly to meet the Heavenly Father.

“The aspirant started back down, but now, aided by the resplendent halo that had been given to him, he was able to make out all of the nooks and crannies along the path that he had not noticed the first time.

“He could not contain his laughter when he saw the strange clothes that the travelers making their own way to the top after him were wearing.

“Here, he saw a torn tunic; there, a costly sandal. Vast numbers of pilgrims were leaning on fragile walking sticks, while others were trying to shield themselves in threadbare cloaks; even so, with childlike impertinence, they marched along all sure of themselves as if they were dressed in the most valuable of clothes in the world.

“The winner of knowledge could not put up with the impressions the scene was causing him, and he gave way to statements of ridicule, harshly condemning the ignorance of all those who were making their way in ridiculous or inadequate clothing. He shouted, criticized and made bruising taunts. He spoke to the group of travelers with such sarcasm that many of them gave up the climb and returned to the idleness of the vast lowlands.

“After having cursed everyone indiscriminately, the crowned hero returned to the peak of the mount, expecting to immediately embark on his journey to meet the Heavenly Father. But the Angel very sadly explained that the other people’s clothes, which had provoked him to such pointless sarcasm, were the very same ones that he himself had worn while climbing when he was fragile and half-blind, and that the wings of light, with which he would ascend to the Divine Throne, would only be given to him if he built up love in his innermost being. As it was, he lacked mercy and understanding, and now he had to return belatedly to the path and help others; otherwise, he would never be able to find balance in Heaven.”

A few minutes of unfathomable silence followed...

The Master, however, placing considerable emphasis on his words, concluded:

“There are many souls on earth who flaunt the luminous crown of knowledge, but their hearts lie asleep in mercilessness, distinguishing themselves with their childish sarcasm and undue criticism. Demanding and cruel, and poisoned by misunderstanding, they demean their less knowledgeable or educated fellow beings instead of extending a fraternal hand to them in the realization that they too were once fumbling and imperfect. But as long as they decide not to help their less enlightened and fortunate neighbors by welcoming them with all their heart with sincerity and devotion, they cannot receive the wings with which they can rightfully fly towards Heaven.”

The Wise Minister

Matthew was solemnly discoursing on the mission of those who lead the popular masses, giving specific details about the duties of administrators and the difficulties of servants.

The conversation progressed throughout the course of the evening, when Jesus, seeing that the disciples were waiting for a kind word from him, smiled and said:

“There once was a kingdom in whose inner circles there was a large party of adversaries of the governing king. Little by little, the spirit of rebellion grew in certain rebellious families. Within a few weeks an entire province in despair rose up against the king, impeding his actions.

“Naturally concerned, the king called an accomplished judge to take over the position of prime minister of the country in the hopes of stifling the discord; but the judge began writing a huge number of laws and written documents, which, ultimately, did not bring about the least bit of change.

“Disillusioned, the ruler replaced him with a famous teacher. But upon being entrusted with the prestigious position, this agent wasted time making vehement and impressive speeches that did nothing to change the reigning unrest.

“Internal enemies continued to undermine the nation’s prestige, when the sovereign asked for the help of a priest, who assumed the noble position and immediately began cursing the elements contrary to the king, making the situation that much worse.

“Disheartened, the king brought in a physician to handle overall matters, but as soon as he was in the palace taking part in the public honors, the new minister, in order to win the king’s approval, stated that those who were opposed to the Crown were mentally-ill. This

propaganda was so damaging that disobedience became even more daring and the rebelliousness even more desperate.

“Sensing that the throne was in danger, the ruler replaced the physician with a famous general, who took drastic measures by regimenting armed forces in the loyal regions and mobilizing them against their defiant countrymen. He orchestrated a civil war, and when death began to reap countless lives – including that of the feared general who had been made prime minister of the kingdom – it was with a heavy heart that the king called for a wise man to fill the empty position. He arrived at the palace, did some hard thinking for some time, and then began new activities. He wrote no new laws, nor did he give speeches or censure the insurgents. He wasted no time on scorn, nor did he incite any notions of revenge.

“He went personally to the turbulent region in order to determine what they might need.

“He saw that there were a lot of people without homes, jobs or education, so he built houses, created workshops, opened roadways and constructed schools, encouraging work and education, and fighting bravely with understanding and fraternity against idleness and ignorance.

“It wasn’t very long before all of the discord in the kingdom disappeared, because the concrete action of the good had eliminated all the mistrust, hardness and indecision in all of the sick and rebellious minds in the region.”

Matthew gazed at the Lord in awe, delighted with his ideas of saving kindness. Answering his gaze with a beaming smile, Jesus added in conclusion:

“Hatred can kindle many fires of discord in the world, but no system of salvation will really be worth anything unless it fairly benefits minds that evil or rebelliousness have thrown out of balance. In order for the good to reign, there must be a positive reality in the field of evil so that a living and pure light may arise to banish the darkness.”

Mutual Help

In the company of his peers, Andrew read a meaningful passage from Isaiah and spoke emotionally about the need for salvation.

Matthew commented on the less pleasant aspects of work, and Philip talked about how hard it was to look after our own affairs when we are dedicated to helping others.

Jesus was listening to his disciples in silence, and when the discussion began to die down, he commented candidly:

“Two old friends were walking through the desert region of a mountainous area. Both were feeling ill and were trying to protect themselves as best they could from the blasts of freezing air, when they happened upon a half-dead child lying in the road at the mercy of the high winds of winter.

“One of them stared at the unusual sight and said irritably: ‘Well, I’m not going to waste my time; I have to worry about taking care of myself. Let’s move on.’

“The other was more compassionate, however, and replied:

“‘Friend, we must save the child. He’s our brother in humanity.’

“‘I can’t’, said the heartless friend. ‘I’m tired and sick. This stranger would be an unbearable burden. It’s cold and it’s storming. We have to make it to the next village without wasting another minute.’

“And he set off in long strides.

“The kindhearted traveler, however, leaned over the outstretched boy and took a few minutes to hold him paternally against his chest. Cradling him close, he pressed onwards, although at a slower pace.

“The freezing rain fell methodically all night long; nonetheless, after a long time carrying the precious bundle, he reached the inn in the village. He was greatly surprised when he didn’t find his friend there, the one who had gone on ahead of him. It was only on the

following day, after a painstaking search, that the unfortunate traveler was found dead, hidden beside the flooded road.

“Hurriedly pressing on alone and selfishly trying to save himself, he was unable to withstand the waves of violently cold air and fell over soaking wet without anything to help him against the freezing weather. His companion, on the other hand, had received the soft warmth from the child’s body as he held it close to his heart, and had been able to endure the frigid night. Thus, he was saved from a similar tragedy. He had discovered the sublimity of mutual help. By helping the abandoned child, he had helped himself. By selflessly stepping forward to help someone else, he had managed to triumph against the hardship of the journey, thereby enjoying the blessings of mutual salvation.”

The simple story left the disciples taken aback and touched.

A look of tender admiration was evident in the teary-eyed, humble women attending the meeting, while the men gazed at each other in wonder.

After a short silence, Jesus concluded expressively:

“People’s most eloquent and exact testimonies before the Almighty Father are their own deeds. The very ones whom we help are our support. The heart we save will become a resource for us one day or another. Let no one doubt this. Those who live for themselves are merely a living ornament of loneliness, but those who work on behalf of others are creditors of everyone’s help. By helping, we will in turn be helped. By giving, we will in turn receive: this is the Divine Law.”

In Praise of Courtesy

In the presence of the crowd of suffering and heavyhearted followers, the Master recounted the Beatitudes, making it a point to emphasize the statement that the meek would inherit the earth.

The statement, however, resounded among the disciples in a less than pleasing manner.

Wouldn't such an assertion encourage mental idleness?

If the Gospel called upon valiant minds to sow the renewing truths, how could this need for fearlessness be squared with Jesus' promise regarding the meek? If evil was daring and crushing in all climes and positions, how was it possible for the good to win an immediate victory by means of the inability to react, albeit peaceably?

It was in light of these vague questions that the family group gathered at Peter's house.

Having begun that evening's spiritually constructive discussion, the disciples looked at one another amid inquiry and curiosity.

The Divine Friend seemed to perceive the reason for everyone's expectation, but he waited patiently for his followers to speak up.

It was then that Judas broke the veil of respect that haloed the Master's presence, asking glibly:

"Lord, why did you attribute the ultimate possession of the earth to the meek? Will cowardly hearts really enjoy such a blessing? Will those who are incapable of bearing witness to their faith during the grave moments of struggle and sacrifice also be blessed?"

Jesus did not respond right away.

He glanced around at the others as if to ask them to voice any other doubts that might be clouding their souls.

Peter worked up the nerve to ask:

"Yes, Master. If an evildoer were to visit me at home, shouldn't I

remind him about the need for mutual respect? Should I give in to him without any sort of fraternal admonishment against his criminal whims, under the pretext of safeguarding the meekness to which you referred?”

Christ smiled, as he had done so many times before, and spoke calmly:

“Of course, you are all mistaken. I didn’t praise laziness, which hides behind the mask of humility, nor cowardliness, which dons the appearance of prudence in order to better accommodate itself to human conveniences. Individuals who become attached to such artifices will greatly suffer the spiritual measures that the world uses to reform torturous and indecisive characters. Actually, I was praising the courtesy that we all owe one another. Blessed are the mild mannered who are able to use their constructive energy in a gesture of kindness and a word of understanding! Blessed are the children of balance and kindness who learn how to deny evil without insulting ignorant neighbors who request it without knowing what they are asking for! Blessed are those who repeat the same lesson a thousand times over without boasting about it, so that their neighbor might feel the influence of their action! Blessed are those who know how to deal with the rich and the poor, the wise and the ignorant, the good and evil with the spirit of service and understanding, giving to each one in accordance with their merits and needs, while leaving traces of improvement, spiritual growth, well-being and contentment wherever they go! In truth I say to you that they will inherit the spiritual domain of the earth, because all those who welcome their neighbor within the guidelines of love and respect are owners of the hearts that are perfected in the world!”

Relief and happiness overflowed from the overall enthusiasm, and with eyes now fixed on the waters of the immense lake, the Lord asked Matthew to close that evening’s fraternal lesson with a prayer.

The Blessing of Encouragement

The disciples were discussing how the truth is a primordial duty ranking above all other, normal duties, when Philip stated that no one should withhold consolation under the pretext of keeping things real. And perhaps because Andrew reminded them about the truthfulness with which the Master attended to the widest variety of life's problems, the Lord began the following story:

“There was once a devoted head of a family who bravely struggled to gather enough resources to support his home. After enjoying a long period of abundance, overnight he found himself poor and deserted by his best friends because of an enormous business disaster. The unfortunate man was unable to withstand the blow that the world had dealt his spirit and he died a few days later, eaten away by unspeakable sorrow.

“Left to fend for herself, the brave widow dried her tears at the feet of her six young children and gathered them around their old table. She could see that they looked completely overcome by sadness and discouragement.

“Surrounded by so many tears and woes, the woman thought and thought ... and then she went into a room and came back with a small, wooden box that had been cautiously locked, and spoke to her kids with a tone of certainty:

‘My children, we are not really in such dire straits. In this coffer is a valuable treasure that your foresightful father left for you. It contains enough wealth to bring happiness to us all; however, the largest savings accounts in the world disappear if they aren't nourished at the fount of honest and productive work. It may be true that your father left us heavily in debt when he was laid to rest. But shouldn't we try to regain our precious legacy through hard work? Let's use our time to

improve our lot, and if you would agree with me, we will open the box at a later time unless the demand for daily bread becomes unbearable.’

“A bright smile of happiness and comfort appeared on all their faces.

“No one disagreed with the mother’s suggestion.

“The following day, the six youngsters courageously got busy. Making use of a large piece of rented farmland, they zealously planted wheat in an impressive act of collaboration. With such a demonstration of devotion, the family had paid all their debts in six years and had acquired an enormous piece of land in the country. Their father’s name was once again crowned with the honor and good fortune it deserved.

“When they had accumulated far more assets than had been lost by their father, one particular night they met with their mother in order to find out what was in the box.

“The old woman very carefully brought them the coffer, smiled happily and opened it without much effort. Much to her children’s amazement, inside the box there was only an old parchment with the beautiful words of Solomon on it:

‘A wise son makes his father glad, but a foolish son makes his mother sad. The treasures of ungodliness can never be enjoyed, but righteousness delivers us from dying in evil. The Lord does not allow the righteous soul to go hungry; however, he rejects the harvest of the unrighteous. He who works with a deceptive hand becomes poor, but the hand of the industrious enriches them for all eternity.’

The youngsters looked at each other with unspeakable happiness and gave thanks for the unforgettable lesson that their loving mother had given them.”

The Master fell silent at the look of his disciples’ contentment and wonder, and after a short pause, he concluded sententiously:

“Who would label this great woman as being deceitful? We might say ‘yes, yes’ or ‘no, no’ during the dire predicaments of life, but we should never despise the blessing of encouragement in the edifying battles of each day. The tender bud is the promise of the fruit. Under the pretext of lighting the lamp of truth, let no one douse the candle of hope.”

The Recipe for Happiness

Thaddeus, one of the most passionate speakers during the Gospel services at Peter's house, was enthusiastically discussing the rules for human happiness and was speaking out against the Roman conquerors and the rabbis of the Sanhedrin.

In the grips of such obvious rebelliousness, he spoke at great length about the discord and suffering that reigned among the people, placing the blame on the political short-comings of the time. After he had expounded several valuable opinions on the subject, Jesus asked him:

“Thaddeus, what is your idea of happiness?”

“Lord, happiness is peace for all.”

Christ displayed a meaningful expression on his face, and he offered:

“Yes, Thaddeus, I am aware of that; however, I would like to know what would make you personally truly happy.”

With a certain amount of hesitation, the disciple replied:

“Master, I think I would experience supreme tranquility if others could understand me.

“For that to happen, I wish that those close to me wouldn't disdain my noble and pure intentions.

“I know that I make a lot of mistakes because I'm human, but I would be happy if those who are part of my life would acknowledge my sincere intentions of doing the right thing.

“I would experience blessed joy if I could trust others and receive from them the fair consideration that I feel I deserve because of my high ideals.

“I long for everyone's respect so that I can work with no hindrances.

“I would be delighted if slander were to forget about me.

“I live hoping for cordiality from others, and I think the world would be a paradise if people who tread the same path would treat each other with the same respect with which I myself would like to be treated.

“Indifference and malicious lies wound my heart.

“I believe that sarcasm and suspicion were invented by the Spirits of darkness to torment people.

“Ungodliness is like bile when directed at me; cruelty is a phantom of pain when it comes out to meet me.

“Because of all this, I would be happy if my family members, close friends and fellow citizens would regard me not for what I appear to be due to the imperfections of my body, but rather for the amount of goodwill that I believe I have in my soul.

“Most of all, Lord, I would be extremely happy if all those with me on life’s journey would grant me the right to freely experience my own kind of personal happiness, as long as I abide by the code of the good in the field of my conscience, without irony and irrelevant criticism.

“In short, Master, with the blessed recourse of suffering and time, I would like to be understood, respected and held in esteem by others, even though I may not yet be the model of perfection that Heaven would like me to be.”

The disciple stopped talking and displayed an obvious curiosity about what Christ would say about the matter.

Some of his companions expected the Heavenly Friend to make a long speech, but the Master affixed his crystal clear eyes on the disciple and said frankly yet kindly:

“Thaddeus, if you desire happiness and contentment from the entire world, do unto others as you would have them do unto you. If everyone would follow that rule, we would very quickly spread the glories of Heaven across the earth.”

Secret Charity

The conversation at Peter's house on this particular night was about practicing the good, and everyone was taking part.

How can you show compassion if you don't have any money? How can you encourage benevolence if you have no financial resources?

Great names of material wealth were cited with regard to these questions, and the majority of those present were inclined to believe that only the powerful on earth were capable of stimulating acts of mercy, when the Master interrupted, kindheartedly offering his opinion:

"A man who was truly devoted to the Law was exhorted by heavenly resolutions to perform acts of beneficence. However, he lived in extreme poverty and there was no way whatsoever for him to deduct even the smallest amount from his pay to help others. So, whenever possible, he gave of himself with kind words and personal gestures of comfort and encouragement to all those who were going through pain and hardship. But it saddened his heart that he was unable to provide coats and bread to the ragged and starving people alongside the road where he lived.

"Surrounded by small children, he was a slave in the home that was watered with his sweat.

"Even so, he realized that if he couldn't do any public charity, he could at least wage war against evil in all the circumstances of his earthly journey.

"This was how he began to pay continual attention to extinguishing all of the inferior thoughts that were suggested to him. Whenever he came in contact with people who liked to speak ill of others, he would politely leave, and when responding to any sort of direct inquiry about someone, he would remember this or that small

virtue of the absent victim. If someone was easily angered in his presence, he would consider the anger an illness that needed treatment, and he would quietly withdraw. Insults from others beat down on his spirit like stones on a honey barrel, because, besides not striking back, he treated the offender with his usual fraternity. Slander found no access to his soul, such that any kind of obscene accusation was lost without effect in his great silence. Whenever he saw threats against someone's peace of mind, he tried humbly to undo the clouds of misunderstanding before they gathered into a storm. If some type of condemning statement was prancing around his neighbor, he would spontaneously do everything he could to defend the person tactfully and inauspiciously. His zeal against the incursion and the spread of evil was so highly detailed that he would even remove debris and stones from public roads so that they would not pose a danger to pedestrians.

“Having adopted these guidelines, he reached the end of his human journey, unable to attend to the world's suggestions for beneficence. He had never been able to offer a bowl of soup or a woolen coat to his neighbors in need.

“This was his situation when death brought him before the divine tribunal, where the humble servant appeared apprehensive and despondent. He was dreading the judgment of the heavenly authorities, when suddenly he was crowned with a brilliant diadem. When he tearfully asked the reason for this unexpected reward, he was told that the sublime recompense was due to his triumphant position in the war against evil, in which he had made himself an invaluable worker.”

The Master looked at his disciples with a piercing, calm gaze and concluded in a friendly tone:

“We can hand out bread and blankets, we can light the lamp for ignorance and we can strengthen fraternity by wiping out discord, but let's not ignore the daily, methodical and serene battle against evil, convinced that in this holy struggle we will win the divine crown of secret charity.”

The Industrious Rich Man

James, the oldest disciple, gave an invaluable talk about the longing for wealth, so commonplace amongst mortals. When the family discussion ended, Jesus commented smiling:

“There was a God-fearing man who was dedicated to uprightness. He read a lot of advice on prudence, and he tried to work hard in order to store up a treasure that would benefit his family. After heart-felt prayer, he went to work at a number of different businesses, anxious to achieve his goal. For twenty years he put away coin after coin, until he had managed to build a patrimony of a few million.

“When he stopped working in order to take a look back at his work, he was greatly disappointed to realize that every area of his life had changed without him even noticing it.

“His home, which was once humble and happy, had taken on a somber mood. His wife had become a slave to a thousand and one obligations intended to kill time. His children whispered amongst themselves, speculating as to what would be their share of their dead father’s inheritance. His loyal friends had deserted him. Believing him to be completely happy, his neighbors fenced him in with envy and irony. The local authorities forced him into a duplicitous attitude of artifice that was completely in disagreement with the sincerity of his heart. Businessmen constantly visited to propose criminal or improper business dealings. His servants flattered him with obvious pretense when he was within earshot, only to curse his name behind closed doors. Due to so many disruptions, he was compelled to make his home into a fortress to protect himself against everyone and everything.

“Now he had the time to take note of various bodily illnesses and he rarely made it through a day without stomach problems or

headaches.

“After a few weeks of close, self-observation, he concluded that the fortune he kept in his coffer under lock and key was the reason for his endless disillusionments and regrets.

“One particular night he could no longer bear the worries stemming from his new-found status, and he prayed in tears, begging for the Lord’s inspiration. After the moving prayer, an angel appeared to him on the evanescent screen of a dream and said to him compassionately:

‘Every fortune that flows like the crystal clear waters of a spring is a living blessing, but all wealth that lies in useless repose is a poisonous well of stagnant water ... Why did you demand a river, when a simple cup of water was enough to quench your thirst? What inspired you to stock granaries to overflowing, when a few grains of wheat were all you needed for a meal? What made you hoard hundreds of pelts around the home, when a few bits of wool were enough to warm your grave-bound body? Go back and convert your coin chest into a miraculous coffer of salvation! Extend the joys of work, build schools to sow spiritual light and distribute happiness to the multitudes! On earth, money is only worth the good it can do!’

“Unspeakably shocked, the chaser of gold awoke transformed, and from that day onward he began to unleash his enormous savings so that all of his neighbors could join him in the blessings of service and goodwill...

“At the first hint of his spiritual renewal, his wife stared at him strangely and repulsed, his children hated him and his beneficiaries thought he was crazy. However, revitalized and happy, the industrious millionaire began enjoying an open sanctuary in his home once again, and the spirit of hidden happiness returned to live in his heart.”

The Master became silent, and James, who was in charge of that evening’s talk, exclaimed enthusiastically:

“Lord, what a priceless and sublime lesson!”

Jesus smiled and responded:

“Yes, but only for those who have ‘ears to hear’ and ‘eyes to see.’”

The Divine Talisman

The members of the household had struck up an interesting discussion about the sublime faculties that the Master demonstrated by healing the insane and the blind, when John and James' diligent mother, Isabel, asked without delay:

“Lord, might you be carrying some sort of talisman whose powers we could benefit from? Some kind of magical object that might help us?”

Jesus rested his piercing gaze on the woman and said laughingly:

“In fact, I do know of a talisman that has wondrous powers. By taking advantage of its miraculous resources, one can begin acquiring all of the blessings of Our Father. It enables one to discover the treasures of love that shine around us and whose splendor we cannot see right away. It unveils understanding wherever discord punishes hearts. It opens the door to the revelations of art and science. It offers the possibility of radiant communion with the divine founts of life. It invites the blessing of meditating on holy things. It reestablishes relations between conflicting parties. It discloses passages of light to minds lingering in darkness. It allows for the blessed spread of happiness. It is clothed in a thousand opportunities for widespread peace. It reveals a vast network of pathways for wholesome work. It uncovers a thousand ways to enhance our lives. It facilitates the soul's access to the thought of great masters. It enables communications with the heavenly fountainheads of intuition.”

“What else does it do?” asked the Lord, placing emphasis on the question.

After smiling complacently, he continued:

“Without this divine talisman it is impossible to start any work of light and peace on earth.”

The eyes of his listeners displayed expressions of amazement, when Zebedee's wife asked earnestly:

“Master, where can we get such a blessing? Tell us. We need this bringer of happiness.”

Then, Christ added good-naturedly:

“This blessed talisman, Isabel, is something we all have. It is ‘the time we are going through’... Each minute of our soul is cloaked in prodigious, hidden power when we learn how to use it for the Infinite Good, because every rise and every fall, every victory and every defeat all begin with the collaboration of the day.”

And before everyone's perplexed looks, he concluded:

“Time is the divine talisman that we should avail ourselves of.”

The Distracted Messengers

Those attending the Gospel worship were discussing the controversies raised around faith in the various circles of Pharisaism, when Christ, with the profound simplicity that was his nature, narrated tolerantly:

“A great ruler received alarming news about a large number of subjects who were being smitten by a deadly fever in a region far from the seat of his government. Wanting to help the wards who were suffering in that remote region of his kingdom, he decided to send them reliable messengers armed with the appropriate medicine for the situation and the means with which to bring them back to health.

The messengers left the palace with great promises to surely and efficiently do what the ruler had asked of them; but as soon as they were outside the ruler’s gates, they began to quarrel about what route to take.

Some demanded that they take the short cut; others, the brier-free plain; still others preferred the passageway through the mountains.

They wasted many days quarreling, until the group finally disbanded, with each phalanx attending to its own whims and completely forgetting about the main objective.

These problems, however, were not readily solved. Taking different routes merely increased the conflicts. Now reduced in number, the various expeditions suffered even more acutely the sterilizing blows of personal opinions. The travelers cared about nothing except to come up with new reasons for pointless friction. Those who had taken the shortest path, which went through the meadowland and the foothills, engaged in nonproductive, contentious and endless arguments. Valuable days and nights were wasted on loud discussions regarding the fever, the condition of the sick, and the

surrounding landscape. Trying hours of bitterness and discord interfered with the trip from time to time, and it took a lot of effort to avoid scenes of fistfights and murder.

“Quarrels arose stemming from the smallest of matters, which completely wasted the opportunity, and because of this, the travelers that had taken the short cut took as long as those who had taken the way through the plain and the foothills; consequently, they ultimately all met up in the disease-ridden valley at the same time. To everyone’s enormous and immeasurable disappointment, because of the lack of the supplies that had been promised, not one sick person was still alive.

“Death had devoured them one by one while the arguing messengers wasted time along the way.”

The Master gazed at the disciples with a very lucid look and added:

“In this allegory the world is being attacked by the plague of evil and disbelief and we see the image of the bearers of heavenly medicine, who represent the religious leaders of all of the organizations that speak in God’s name. In spite of having received valuable resources from Heaven for those who suffer and weep as a result of the ignorance and affliction reigning in the world, those who are enlightened by the wisdom of faith have disregarded the obligations that mark their lives, and valuing their own whims over the designs of the Supreme Lord, they go to extremes in all kinds of verbal altercations. While they feed disorder, carefree and distracted, those in need of light and help grow weak from the lack of aid and dedication.”

And patting the head of one of the children at the meeting, and upon whom all the hopes in the sublime future were focused, he concluded, smiling and calm:

“As advantageous as discussion might be, it should never distract us from the work the Lord has given us to do.”

The Signs of a Renewal

At the household gathering, the Master began to speak persuasively:

“When the Divine Kingdom is at the gates of humankind, the soul of the world will be renewed.

“The person who is the most powerful will not be the one who is the most ruthless, but rather the one who loves the most.

“Conquerors will not be those who war against foreign enemies to the death in rivers of blood, but rather those who combat the iniquity and ignorance that lies within them until evil is wiped out in the realms of their own nature.

“The most eloquent will not be those of the most beautiful speech, but rather those who combine holy words with actions to raise the quality of life wherever they may be.

“The noblest will not be those who hold the largest number of titles granting them the transitory control of ephemeral lands on earth, but those who most intensely accrue the acclaims of love and gratitude in the hearts of mothers and children, the sick and the elderly, loyal and honest persons, hard-working and upright persons, and humble and kind ones.

“Those who are the most respected will not be dispensers of gold and armed might, but rather those with the purest hearts.

“Those who are the holiest will not be the ones who isolate themselves on altars of supreme spiritual pride, avoiding contact with those who suffer because they are afraid of becoming dishonored and unclean, but rather those who come down from their aggrandizement, extending fraternal hands to the wretched and suffering, raising their dilacerated souls to the realms of joy and understanding.

“The purest will not be those who flee from communicating with

evil, avowed criminals, but those who dive into the mire to save their fallen brethren without contaminating themselves in the process.

“Those who are the most knowledgeable will not be the ones who have the most books and theories, but the ones who, even though they know little, try to light a lamp in the darkness that still envelops their closest neighbor.”

The Divine Friend rested his lucid eyes on the clear night that was shining outside in the heart of Nature, made a long pause and emphasized:

“In that sublime age, people will not leave their homes to war in storms of blood and tears against their neighbor due to their desire for conquest or race hatred, because they will be busy waging war against the darkness of ignorance, the open wounds of illness, the anguish of hunger, and moral torture of all of hues...When the plow replaces the opulent chariot of victors in public displays of collective grandeur; when the edifying book takes the place of the sword in the minds of the people; when goodness and wisdom preside over human competition so that good individuals may be revered; when personal sacrifice on behalf of all constitutes the true honor of individuality so that peace and love do not lose their place in one’s life – then there will be a New Humanity in the luminous cradle of the Divine Kingdom.”

At this point the sweet and sovereign Word made a slight pause, and there outside, in the warmth of the calm night, the resplendent stars sparkling high in the sky seemed to extol that distant era...

A Visit from Truth

On a certain occasion, the Master said that only the Truth would set people free; and maybe because he was unable at first to grasp the vast extent of that statement, Peter asked him during the home worship service:

“Lord, what is Truth?”

An enigmatic look appeared on Jesus’ face and he answered:

“Complete Truth is complete Divine Light; however, humankind is still far from being able to bear its sublime brightness.”

But perceiving that the fisherman was eager for further enlightenment, the Heavenly Friend thought for a few minutes and said:

“In a dark cave where the daylight never entered, there lived a devout man who prayed for divine assistance. He claimed to be the unhappiest of men; however, in his blindness he felt he was better off than everyone else. He complained about the stench of the place where he lived. ‘The contaminated air is suffocating me,’ he cried pitifully. He begged for a door that would set him free and lead him to the light of day. He claimed to be strong, capable and useful. Why was he stuck here in this painful seclusion? He wept and hollered, laying bare his afflictions and demands. What were the reasons for him being forced to live in that unbearable environment?”

“When Our Father saw this son making incessant pleas amid rebelliousness and bitterness, he was deeply touched and sent Faith to him.

“This sublime virtue exhorted him to trust in the future and to persist in prayer.

“The wretched man felt somewhat consoled, but in no time at all he went back to his complaining.

“He wanted to escape from the dung heap, and since his tears increased even more, the Almighty sent Hope to him.

“This emissary wiped his perspiring brow and spoke to him about the eternality of life, trying to dry his desperate tears. For this, he asked for his calmness, resignation and strength.

“The poor man appeared to get better, but after a few hours, he went back to lamenting.

“I can’t breathe,’ he claimed in despair.

“Sympathetic, the Lord decided that Charity should pay him a visit.

“This new messenger caressed and fed him, and spoke kind words to him, as if it were an unselfish mother.

“Even so, because the miserable man continued his shouting in rebelliousness, the Compassionate Father sent Truth to him.

“When this bearer of knowledge made itself visible in the form of a great light, the unfortunate man saw himself for what he really was and he was stricken with dread. His body was a monstrous mass of pustulous sores from head to toe, and he realized, to his horror, that he was in fact the very cause of the unbearable environment in which he lived. The poor man trembled and staggered about, and noting that serene Truth had opened the door to his freedom, he was horrified of himself. Without any courage to think about healing himself, rather than looking his visitor straight in the eye in order to learn how to cleanse and purify himself, he ran off in terror in search of another cave where he could hide the misery that he alone had caused.”

The Master paused at length and then said:

“This is what happens to most people when faced with reality. They feel they have the right to receive all of the Eternal Father’s blessings and they cry out loudly, begging for Heaven to help them. When they are aided by Faith, Hope or Charity, they are at first consoled and then they become disconsolate; they believe and then disbelieve, feeling timid, angry and hesitant. However, when Truth shines down on them, revealing the real state they are in, they are usually quick to run off in search of dark hiding places where they can cultivate their delusion.

The Merit of Service

Philip, the old fisherman from Capernaum, was enraptured with Jesus' explanations of a text from Isaiah and began to comment on the difference between the righteous and the unrighteous in order to point out the merit of saintliness.

The Master listened calmly, and perhaps to prevent too much discussion of the subject, he kindly told the following story:

“There once was a Pharisee who led an irreprehensible life and had reached a social position of great public respect. He spent days on end in the Temple praying and fasting. He knew the law like no one else. From Moses to the last of the Prophets, he had memorized the most important texts of the revelation. When he walked down the street, he was held in such esteem that even the children bowed in reverence before him. He had consecrated himself to the Holy of Holies and he lived a perfect life amid the sinners of his time. He ate meagerly, wore a spotless tunic and abstained from speaking with anyone he deemed unclean.

“However, it so happened that there was a widespread plague in a city near Jerusalem, and an Angel of the Lord came down to help offer aid to the sick and needy in the name of Divine Providence.

“But he needed the industrious hands of a man, through which he could work without delay on behalf of the ill and suffering.

“He looked to the holy Pharisee, known in the Heavenly Court for his reiterated vows of spiritual perfection, but the devoted man believed himself to be so deeply immersed in his thoughts of cleanliness that he didn't have even the tiniest bit of room in his heart to consider any thought of helping the victims of the epidemic.

“How was he to lend a hand to the divine messenger in this matter when he avoided the least bit of contact with the common world,

which, in his mind, he regarded as a valley of squalor?

“The angel persisted in trying to find someone, however, because the plague was serious and there was no time to waste.

“The messenger left the Pharisee and turned to other lovers of the Law, but none of them believed they were in a position to help.

“No one wanted to put themselves at risk.

“In light of these excuses not to help, the Messenger from Above found an old criminal who wanted to change his ways. Through invisible threads of thought, the angel invited him to follow him; the old thief really did want to change, so he didn’t hesitate a second. He harkened to the angel’s gentle coercion and quickly devoted himself enthusiastically and genuinely, offering his robust and authentic cooperation to the ministry of aid and salvation.

“He buried bodies, concocted medicines that were fitting for the situation, sowed encouragement, relieved the afflicted, renewed the spirits of the sick, freed countless little children who were threatened by the harm, created services of consolation and hope, and in so doing, won solid friendships in Heaven, thereby advancing remarkably on the path towards Paradise.”

Those present listened to this little story between admiration and disappointment, and since no one said anything, the Lord commented after a lengthy pause:

“Virtue is always noble and venerable, but one must not crystallize it as if it were a rare but useless jewel. If love covers a multitude of sins, then sanctifying service, which draws inspiration from it, can bring converted sinners the companionship of the angels. The idle righteous, on the other hand, will have to wait for such companionship.”

Seeing that his listeners had withdrawn into silence, the Lord closed the home Gospel worship so that repose could bring his disciples the many blessings of peace and meditation beneath the star-studded sky.

The Forgotten Gift

Everyone had focused their attention on an interesting discussion about the gifts with which Heaven blesses souls on earth, when the Lord commented patiently:

“There once was a man who had been showered with the gift of merit. Consequently, he received permission from the Higher Realms to approach the Angel who was the dispenser of the divine gifts abounding in the world.

“The fortunate man thus asked the Heavenly Minister for the blessing of Youth.

“He was granted his request, but soon he realized that youth might entail strength and beauty, but it also entailed spiritual inexperience and weakness. No longer interested in youth, he went back to the Sublime Bestower and asked him for Wealth.

He was granted riches and enjoyed great wealth for a long time. However, he finally realized that having a lot of money provoked malignant envy in many people. Having become tired of the toilsome task of protecting his assets, he sought out the Angel and asked him for Freedom.

“He thought he was truly free. Even so, he was confronted by cruel, unseen demons that pestered him all the time, filling his mind with troubles and temptation.

“Exhausted due to the constant inner conflict in which he was living, he went back to the Heavenly Giver and asked for Power.

“He received this new gift and clothed himself in great authority. However, he realized – sooner than he had expected – that authority generates hatred and rebelliousness in lazy and ignorant hearts, and tormented by the hidden daggers of indiscipline and discord, he went back to his benefactor and begged him for Intelligence.

“Nevertheless, as a man of knowledge and learning, he lost the rest of the peace that he once enjoyed. He quickly understood that it was not possible for him to sow reality in keeping with his wishes. In order not to fall prey to the destructive action of those he had benefited, he was compelled to plant a seed of truth amongst the thousand flowers of fleeting fantasy, and rather than adapting to the situation, he went back to the Angel and asked him for Marital Bliss.

“Satisfied with his new purpose, he found comfort in a wonderful home and created a gracious family; but one day, death appeared and robbed him of his wife.

“Anguished at being a widower, he sought out the Minister of the Eternal One, and stating that once again he had made a mistake, he asked him for the gift of Health.

“He received his gift. However, after a few years had passed, old age appeared and disfigured his body, deteriorating and wrinkling it without mercy.

“Tormented and unable to leave home, his Angel friend came to him, and embracing him like a father, asked him what new gift he wanted from Heaven.

“The despondent man said that there wasn’t one.

“What more could he ask for?

“It was then that the glorious messenger explained that in his quest for happiness, he had forgotten about the greatest of all the gifts that can uphold a person in the world: the gift of Courage. Courage produces enthusiasm and good spirits with which to carry out the work that is needed each and every day.”

Jesus paused for a few minutes, and then, smiling at the small group, he concluded:

“Youth is beautiful; Wealth is pleasing; Freedom is admirable; Power is brilliant; Intelligence is respectable; a Blissful Marriage is holy; Physical Health is blessed; but if people do not have Courage with which to deal with the good and bad things in human life in order to learn how to stay on the pathway towards God, the temporary gifts of the transitory experience are of little use.”

And putting one of the children on his lap, he nodded toward the starry sky, as if to say that only in Heaven will the lasting happiness of men and women find its true home.

The Heavenly Reply

When Bartholomew asked for an explanation about Heaven's answers to people's prayers, Jesus responded to enlighten everyone:

"An old teacher of the Divine Commandments was on a mission of Heavenly Truth from distant village to distant village accompanied by his dog. One night, darkness began to fall without him having determined how many miles separated him from his next destination.

"Noticing that being all alone in the middle of nature was quite frightening, he prayed for protection from the Eternal Father and continued on his way.

"When the moonless night finally set in fully, he saw a wide and comfortable-looking hollow by the side of the path. Petting the dog that was following watchfully behind him, he decided to lie down and sleep. He was just about to settle into the hollow, when a dark cloud of voracious flies attacked him all of a sudden, forcing him to continue on his way.

"The old man continued walking, when he came to a deep creek on a stretch where the road forked. A rustic bridge offered a way across it on the main road and just beyond it the ground looked welcoming, because, although it was enveloped in nocturnal darkness, it looked like a broad, white sheet.

"The holy preacher decided to lead his obedient companion to the other bank, but the bridge suddenly gave way, collapsed and broke into pieces.

"With no other way across, the old man took the other path, and finding a healthy tree full of welcoming branches, he thought about conveniently taking shelter under it, because, from the sounds of thunder in the distance, the sky was announcing a storm. The stately tree offered an alluring and safe shelter in its hollow trunk. He was

ready to take up refuge there, but a gale began blowing so strongly that the tree came crashing down and split apart.

“Thus exposed to the rain, the traveler continued on his way.

After approximately two miles he came across an old country house that appeared to have a soft light on inside, and he breathed a sigh of relief.

“He knocked on the door. The gruff man who answered refused him in no uncertain terms, alleging that the place did not welcome visitors in the middle of the night and that he was not allowed to take in strangers.

“He begged and pleaded, but the preacher was forced to continue onwards.

“He got as comfortable as he could beneath the storm near a small hut. Soon, however, the dog, terrorized by the incessant lightning, ran off yelping, becoming lost in the darkness.

“Now alone, the old man wept in anguish, believing that he had been forsaken by God. In the middle of the night he heard muffled yelling and cursing, but was unable to tell where it was coming from.

“Curious, he waited for dawn, and after the sun began to rise in its full splendor, he left his hiding place, and found out from some terrified farmers that a band of thieves had pillaged the very same house that he had been turned away from and had killed the people who lived there.

“A sudden spiritual light bloomed in his mind.

“He realized that Divine Goodness had saved him from the evildoers and that when the howling dog ran off, he had been assured a peaceful night’s sleep.

“When told that he was on the path heading in the opposite direction of where he wanted to go, he retraced his steps in order to get back on the right road. When he got to the broken bridge a repairman explained to him that the white soil on the other side was nothing more than treacherous swampland, where many careless travelers had died.

“The old man gave thanks to the Father for having saved him, and when he reached the fallen tree, a young boy told him that the seemingly welcoming tree trunk was a well-known wolves’ den.

“Very thankful to the Lord who had so miraculously helped him, he sought out the hollow where he had tried to rest. In it he found a nest of poisonous snakes.

“Offering endless thanks to Heaven for the different forms of help that he had been unable to understand at first, he continued onwards, safe and sound, to carry out his work.”

At this point in the interesting story, the Master gazed a while at Bartholomew and then concluded:

“The Father always hears our pleas, but we need discernment in order to understand his answers and put them to the best use.”

A Parable Retold

After the parable of the Good Samaritan, that night at Simon's house Thaddeus was genuinely interested in the subject and asked the Master to go into greater depth about the lesson. Jesus was willing as usual and began:

"An ill man, grimacing in pain, was lying on the ground at the gates of a large city. He was being watched by a small group of unlearned and indifferent people.

"A young, generous Roman sped by in his chariot and tossed two silver coins at the man, but an ill-mannered street urchin ran off with them.

"Soon thereafter, a venerable scribe of the Law passed by. He said that he had important matters to take care of, but he promised to send authorities to help the nameless beggar.

"Almost immediately, a priest came parading by. He threw the homeless traveler a gesture of blessing, and stating that the worship of the Supreme Lord awaited him, he exhorted the people to take the sick man in and feed him.

"After him, a respectable lady suddenly came on the scene. The poor man made a moving plea, but the noble matron, bemoaning her role as a woman, asked if there weren't any men around who might help the sick man.

Minutes afterwards, a great judge came along the same stretch of public road, and alleging that he would need evidence proving that the wretch was not in fact some common fiend, he quickly left under the pretext that the opportunity did not behoove him.

"After a few moments more, a dealer in moneybags appeared who sympathetically asserted his lack of time and gave twenty coins to a kind-looking man so that the matter of assistance might be resolved;

but the extempore agent was really an escaped convict who ran off with the money without rendering the aid he had promised.

“The sick man writhed and sweat in pain, groveling in the dust, when along came an old publican, regarded as being a lowlife because he didn’t worship the Lord according to the rules of the Pharisees. To everyone’s shock and amazement, he went up to the poor man, spoke a few words of encouragement and kindness to him, and helped him up. Supporting him with his own strength, he led him to a trustworthy inn, gave him the medicine he needed, and shared the small amount of money he had on him. Then, he returned to his journey, continuing on his way with peace of mind.”

After pausing briefly, the Master asked the disciple:

“In your opinion, who performed a true act of charity?”

“Well, of course,” exclaimed Thaddeus good naturedly, “although apparently despicable, it was the publican, because, in addition to giving him money and kind words, he also gave him his sentiments, his time, his arm and his fraternal encouragement, using his own strength to do so.”

Jesus complacently gazed at his disciple with a penetrating look and replied:

“You too should do the same. Charity through others is without a doubt both honorable and commendable, but the good that we practice directly by giving of ourselves is always the greatest and surest of all.”

The Rule of Helping

At the height of youthful curiosity, John realized that he was facing a new way of life – such was the greatness with which the Gospel shone through in the Lord’s teachings – so, he asked Jesus what the most dignified way would be for disciples to act towards their neighbor, in the sense of helping others. The Divine Friend responded with a clear and firm voice:

“John, if you are seeking a rule of thumb by which to help others while at the same time helping yourself, remember to love your companions of the earthly journey as much as you would like to be loved and helped by them.

“Under the pretext of fostering the truth, don’t make your life a battle in which your feet walk the earth like a fierce warrior in the desert. Remember that most ill persons already realize to some degree what their illness is, and so they need friendship and understanding more than they need medicine.

“Bear in mind that there’s not one soul on earth who doesn’t have difficult problems to resolve; because of this, learn to show fraternal courtesy toward all of them.

“Welcome your travel companions not merely with the greeting suggested by the rules of etiquette, but also with the warmth of your sincere desire to serve.

“Gaze into the eyes of people as they talk to you, observing their kind interest, and always be a tactful and attentive listener. Don’t raise your voice too loudly, because the certainty and serenity with which the most serious of matters should be dealt does not depend upon how loudly they are discussed.

“Refrain from taking part in futile conversations; undignified comments are always a criminal invasion into personal matters.

“Praise those who are industrious, and even when faced with those who are evil and lazy, try to exalt the good they are capable of doing.

“Flee pessimism, but wisely keep up your guard when dealing with individuals who are enterprising in carrying out respectable yet fleeting businesses in the world. Unproductive melancholy, which knows only how to complain, has never been useful to Humankind, who is in need of good spirits.

“Make daily use of the shiny key of a friendly smile. It is with a spontaneous gesture of kindness that we can ward off many crimes and erase many wrongs.

“Do your best to always be punctual; don’t make your friends wait for you, so that you are not attributed a false sense of importance.

“Give thanks for all the blessings along the way, acknowledging both the large ones and the small ones. If the sun provides warmth for life, the grain of wheat provides our daily bread.

“Allow the living, invisible waters of Love that proceed from God Our Father flow through your heart to benefit the realm of struggle in which you live. Love is the divine force that enriches life and bestows power.

“Above all, let us do the best we can to aid in the happiness and spiritual growth of everyone around us; not just here, but everywhere; not just today, but always.”

Christ became silent, and acknowledging the beauty of this plan, the young apostle asked him respectfully:

“Lord, how am I to fulfill such meaningful teachings?”

The Master responded resolutely:

“Good will is our resource each and every hour.”

And patting the troubled apostle on the head, he brought the evening’s prayer session to a close.

The Reason for Pain

Rachel, a long-time servant of Cusa, spoke up in order to ask the Master why pain had become such an affliction on the pathways of the world.

Weren't men and women God's creation? Weren't they entitled to the blessed help of the angels? Didn't Heaven watch over the destinies of Humankind?

Jesus looked firmly into her eyes and said:

"The reason behind human pain is divine protection. Peoples are families of God, and like large flocks of sheep, they are enclosed in the Sheepfold of the Most High. The earth is the path. The struggle that teaches and edifies is the way forward. Suffering is the goad that awakens the sheep that are distracted alongside the path of truth."

There were a few moments of silence and the Master began again:

"Excessive power favors abuse; too much comfort frequently brings laxity, and bread that piles up in excess usually becomes food for vermin that take pleasure in the mold."

Perceiving that the group of friends was asking him for a fuller explanation, he elaborated fraternally:

"By order from the Eternal Father, an angel took charge of an ordinary man at birth. He taught him how to feed himself, to move his arms, legs and muscles, to smile, to rest and to take refuge in his mother's arms. Without leaving its ward's side, day and night it gave him the first lessons of speech, and then guided him to do more things, providing him with the opportunity to learn and think, to read, write and do arithmetic. Hour by hour it kept him from the pernicious or deadly influences of the miserable spirits that would undoubtedly carry him off to the abyss of death. It breathed illumined thoughts into his mind from the light of the Infinite Good through a thousand ways of

imperceptible aid, ensuring him health and physical balance. It gave him invisible medicine through air and water, clothing and plants. On innumerable occasions it saved him from error, crime and the unending ills that torment sinners. At dawn, the Heavenly Page attentively prepared a calm and profitable day for him, watching over his breathing, nourishment and thought, and guarding his steps with love in order to best conserve his gifts. At dusk, it stood watch at the head of his bed, safeguarding his body against the attack of infernal spirits, watching over him with a mother's care with sweet spiritual instructions while he was asleep. Throughout his life, it guided his ideas, helped him to choose his emotions and to find a worthy and respectable job. It enlightened his young mind, breathed holy enthusiasm into him for the pathway of the superior life, and encouraged him to establish a realm of blessing and service, progress and spiritual growth in a home. However, the man, who had never thought to give thanks for the blessings surrounding him, became proud and cruel toward others. He, who had been given such great blessings from Heaven, never felt the urge to extend them on earth, and began to humiliate others with the glory with which he had been clothed by his devout and invisible benefactor. When he experienced his first disappointment, which he himself caused by belittling the law of universal love that establishes fraternity and respect for others, he made a gesture of rebelliousness against Heaven, accusing the Supreme Lord of being unjust and indifferent. Deeply hurt, the guardian angel was trying to impress him with the ideal of kindness, when a Higher Angel came down and ordered the first annoyance of the ward, hardened by the excess of privileges, to be turned into affliction. Rolling mentally from one affliction to the next, the man began to reap the qualities of patience, humility, love and peace with all; thus making him the Father's invaluable coworker in Creation."

When he had finished, Jesus expected Rachel to raise some type of question, but the servant was mute, dominated by the thoughts that that evening's teachings had suggested. The Gospel worship came to a close with a meaningful prayer of inexpressible joy.

Victorious Faith

Andrew was pointing out certain difficulties involved in spreading the new, redemptive principles of which the Master was a messenger. Making reference to the Pharisees with a passionate bitterness, he urged his fellow disciples to form an organized resistance movement. Jesus, however, had been listening with imperturbable tolerance to the angry discussion, and as soon as he got everyone quieted down, he asserted:

“No school of religion will triumph with the Father if it is devoid of love, which is our responsibility to cultivate toward one another.”

And perhaps because a justified expectation was expressed regarding the moral teaching that his divine words of wisdom could weave, he began very calmly:

“In the times of early faith, three primitive men settled with their families in a large forest, and after having lived in fraternal harmony for a time, they began to argue about the nature of the Creator. One of them insisted that the Almighty lived in the thunder; another believed that the Father resided in the wind and the third, that He lived in the Sun. All three of them felt they were His sons, but they wanted at all costs to stick to their own individual opinions.

“After harsh verbal altercations, they turned to fighting openly.

“One of the three was armed with a large supply of ore; another, with a great pile of stones, and the third had hidden behind a pile of wood; thus, pieces of firewood and crude stones were the weapons they would use in the great conflict.

“All of them invoked the protection of the Supreme Lord for their families and then they threw themselves into the fray. The conflict escalated to the point that they went throughout the forest harming both trees and animals until the All-Compassionate One sent them a

friendly angel.

“The messenger visited their forts in the guise of an ordinary man, and instead of taking away the tools with which they were destroying living things, he told them that all three of their traditions were invaluable in their own way. He told them that they only needed to take a new approach. He explained that all three were right in the belief that nourished their souls, because God lives in the sun that sustains His creatures, in the wind that helps nature and in the thunder that renews the atmosphere. And with a lot of patience, he explained that the Creator can only be honored by means of dignified and profitable work by teaching the first one to transform the hard pieces of ore into tools with which to till the earth during the planting season; the second one by converting his wood into valuable pieces for well-being; the third by using his stones to build comfortable shelters. To everything was to be added the good doctrine of working for everyone’s progress and evolution. The three contenders thus understood the greatness of victorious faith through constructive acts, and the discord ended for good.”

The Master made a short pause and added:

“In matters of religion, all believers have respectable reasons for holding to it and they have invaluable abilities that should be made use of to enhance life and time, thereby glorifying the Father. But when people hold on to Heaven’s blessings and do nothing for others or for themselves, they are like a miser who dives headlong into the hell of thirst and hunger in order to wrongly hide the wealth that God has loaned him. For this very reason, faith that does not help, teach or console is no more than dark vanity of the heart.”

A heavy silence fell over everyone and Andrew lowered his timid eyes in order to better grasp the enlightening message.

The Divine Plea

The usual members of the household group had gathered, when the Lord, with melancholy and lucid eyes, perhaps because he noticed a trace of hidden rebelliousness in the listeners' hearts, spoke in a sublime tone:

“My dear ones, those who seek the Sun of the Divine Kingdom must arm themselves with love in order to win the great battle of the light against the darkness. And to store love in your heart you must first broaden your sources of mercy.

“Let us take pity on rulers; those who have been raised to great heights without adequate support may fall into a ravine of darkness.

“Let us help slaves; those in the thorn bushes of the valley may get lost in unconformity before they can climb the mountain of redemption.

“Let us help children; the tender herb may get scorched in the midday sun.

“Let us help the elderly; the night is not always blessed with stars.

“Let us extend a fraternal hand to the criminal along the roadside; remorse is a devastating volcano.

“Let us help those who seem to be blameless; there is an infallible righteousness above the human realms, and not all those who die blessed in human eyes ascend to be blessed in Heaven.

“Let us help those who teach; masters are tormented by the very lessons that they teach others.

“Let us give aid to those who learn; disciples who study without applying what they have learned acquire a heavy debt before the Eternal One.

“Let us strengthen those who are good; on earth the threat of discouragement hovers over everyone.

“Let us help bad people; hardened spirits may turn wicked.

“Let us remember the afflicted and fraternally embrace them; pain, when misunderstood, turns into a bonfire of anguish.

“Let us help those who are happy; the storm usually surprises careless travelers with death.

“Health demands cooperation so as not to become ruined.

“Sickness needs medicine in order to be overcome.

“Government requires help so as not to overstep its bounds.

“Obedience demands friendly support in order not to lose itself in despair.

“As long as the Kingdom of the Lord does not shine in people’s hearts and minds, the earth will remain a school for the good, a purgatory for the evil and a pain-filled hospital for all types of patients.

“Without a lamp lit by fraternal compassion, it is impossible to heed the Divine Will.

“The first step to perfection is comprehension combined with righteous assistance.”

The Master stopped speaking, while the disciples remained speechless.

And because they remained quiet, their eyes brimming with tears, Jesus began to pray, asking the Father for enlightenment and help, peace and understanding for the rich and the poor, masters and slaves, learned and unlearned individuals, good and bad ones, big and little ones...

When he finished praying, the breezes from the lake blew harmoniously and softly, as if nature had sent them blowing towards Heaven to take Jesus’ plea to the Heavenly Father’s throne beyond the stars...

The Offended Servant

After Delilah, Azor the weaver's wife, made comments regarding the evils of certain disreputable publicans who had shown her disrespect in the public square when she was trying to practice the good, Jesus recounted simply:

“There was once a merciful woman who wanted to be a messenger of the Divine Kingdom on earth, so she came knocking on Heaven's doors asking for work.

“She was greeted attentively by an angel who suggested that she visit a tavern in order to save two careless good men who had gotten drunk, overcome by insinuations suggested by spirits of darkness.

“The very next day, however, the messenger reappeared in tears explaining to the Minister of the Eternal One that she had been unable to do what he had asked, because the place was full of gamblers exchanging obscene and cruel words.

“So, the angel sent her to a hidden place in nearby forest in order to rescue a homeless child.

“But the next day the emissary returned, stating that she had been unable to carry out the task because the cave was a hiding place for a number of half-naked men and women who might harm her chastity as a woman.

“Without giving up on her, the Heavenly Agent appointed her to help a dying woman, but a few hours later the worker returned blushing to the core, and told the angel that she had not even been able to enter the sick woman's room, because the patient's husband was in the waiting room speaking with a questionable woman about a plan to murder someone the following evening.

“Although somewhat disappointed, the obliging Minister of the Almighty suggested that she help two mentally ill men who were living

in a place of filth and squalor.

“The horrified worker returned quickly the following day, stating that she had been unable to fulfill the objective because the crazed men were living deeply affected in scenes of an unclean life, and that she had been highly appalled by it.

The Agent of the Most High, after listening to her with obvious wonder, asked her to help a young girl who was in grave danger. But the overly sensitive worker soon returned, exclaiming that the girl was at a wild party and was in a repulsive moral condition.

“And so it was that the candidate for heavenly work went uselessly through the week, cultivating ineffectiveness under various pretexts.

“Even so, she once again went looking for the angel to ask for work, but received this fitting response:

‘My sister, just go back to your normal earthly endeavors for the time being.’

‘Oh, but why?!’ she asked, perplexed. “Don’t I deserve to draw nigh to a higher level of life?’

‘Your eyes are full of ill will,’ the Minister patiently pointed out, ‘and in order to serve the Lord, the servant of the good corrects offenses lovingly and silently without being offended personally.’”

The Master was silent for a few moments, and then he concluded matter-of-factly:

“Those who spend too much time worrying about evil are in no condition to do the good.”

His listeners looked at each other in wonder, and a final prayer for the home worship was said, while outside the snow white moon shone in the darkness of the night, symbolizing a glowing invitation from Heaven to the sublime battle for the victory of the light.

The Need for Understanding

One of the disciples had come to the home Gospel worship with a downcast face.

In response to the Lord's fraternal questioning, he explained that he had been treated disrespectfully on the street. He had asked a number of debtors for payment, but they had responded with ingratitude and sarcasm.

Christ did not offer the man any personal advice, but obviously exhorting all the attendees, he narrated benevolently:

"A great expositor of the texts of Job possessed a unique willingness for endeavors of understanding and kindness. And perhaps because of this, he established a school in which he pontificated with unquestionable wisdom.

"On one particular occasion, he was helping a troubled student who often complained about how he was mistreated in the town square. Patiently, he went with the student through the streets of Jerusalem, begging for alms for various Temple services.

"The majority of the passers-by either gave or refused to give alms with a sense of indifference, but on one particularly busy corner a seemingly healthy man answered their plea with harshness and ridicule.

"The master took the student by the hand and both of them cautiously continued on their way. They hadn't gone very far, when they looked back and saw the man fall to the ground, writhing in violent pain. Everyone rushed to his aid. They soon realized that the irascible brother was suffering from deadly colic.

"They continued on their way, when they came across a gentleman who didn't even stoop to respond to their request – he merely gave them a hard and rancorous stare.

“Teacher and ward followed him, and when the strange character reached his home, they saw that a small group of weeping people were waiting for him and that he joined them in copious tears. The two of them learned that the unfortunate man had come home to a dead daughter.

“They continued begging on the street and were soon cussed at by a young man whom they had asked for alms. Expectantly, they withdrew a ways and after half an hour of observing him, they realized that the wretched man was merely insane.

“Then, they heard outrageous words from an old man who was promising them prison and stoning. But after some time, they found out that the poor man was simply a bankrupt business man who had gone from master to slave because of his enormous debt.

“As the day was coming to a close, the respectable teacher invited the disciple to head back to the school with him, and asked:

‘Did you learn the lesson? Accept the need for understanding as a holy commandment in life. Never again will you complain about those who display expressions of rebelliousness or despair in the streets. The first one who we came to was an ordinary ill man; the second one had had a death in his house; the third was insane, and the fourth one had gone bankrupt. In most cases, those who treat us with disdain are following a path that is even darker and thornier than our own.’”

And completing the lesson, the Lord concluded before the amazed disciples:

“Whenever we meet up with bearers of affliction, we must show mercy and help them to regain inner peace. The bull still has horns because it has not yet received the gift of wings. We commonly complain about the sheep that is bothering our repose by bleating in terror, but we rarely remember that the poor animal is under a heavy noose on its way to the slaughterhouse.”

The Tough Problem

In the middle of that evening's discussion, one of the disciples wanted to know what the toughest matter to resolve in searching for Divine Enlightenment was.

What could one say was the most complicated problem in the realm of the spiritual fight?

After naming a number of considerations with regards to the matter, the Master displayed a look of deep understanding as he began telling the following story:

“There was once a great wise man with three young sons who were intelligent and committed to learning. On one particular morning, they were quarreling about what was the hardest obstacle to overcome on the great path of life.

“At the height of the disagreement, perhaps foreseeing an unpleasant outcome, the benevolent father summoned them and gave them an interesting task.

“The three of them would go to the palace of the governing prince, taking with them certain gifts which would display their spirit of cordiality and kindness.

“The first would bear a costly vase made of precious clay.

“The second would take a rare breed of deer.

“The third would carry an exquisite cake made by the family.

“The fraternal trio agreed to the mission with the enthusiastic promise of service. It was only a short three-mile trip, but when they were only half-way there they began to argue.

“The bearer of the vase didn't agree with the way that the one brother was leading the delicate deer, and the one in charge of the animal told the one carrying the cake to be careful not to trip and ruin the delicacy. This last one warned the bearer of the valuable vase not to

drop it.

“The small entourage continued down the road with great difficulty because each traveler was commenting on the responsibilities of the other two with heated and incessant remarks.

“At one particular moment the brother who was leading the deer forgot about his own job in order to correct the position of the clay piece in his brother’s arms, and jostled during their argument, the vase suddenly fell and broke to smithereens on the stony gravel.

“When the vase broke, the distracted guide of the deer lost control of the animal, which escaped in fear into a nearby forest.

“Trying to prevent the deer from fleeing, the one carrying the cake ran after it into the forest and the contents of the silver tray splattered on the ground.

“Disappointed and angry, the three young men went back to their father, and each one of them presented his complaint and failure.

“The wise man, however, smiled and explained:

‘Learn from the lesson of the road. If each of you had been minding your own business, you wouldn’t have reaped the darkness of failure. The most complicated problem in the world, my sons, is that everyone should take care of their own business without meddling in the business of others. As long as we are thinking about other people’s responsibilities, we forget about our own.’

Jesus fell silent, thoughtful, and a prayer of love and understanding completed the lesson.

The Idle Son

The small group was discussing various problems of faith in God, when Jesus began narrating complacently:

“A great Sovereign owned vast domains. There were countless lands, rivers, plantations, orchards and herds in his prodigious kingdom. Innumerable subjects served his house in all areas. Some of them never left their Lord’s sight for very long. From time to time they would visit his palace, offering him their service or the flowers of their affection as they received their new schedules for constructive work. Others, however, lived as they saw fit in the immense woodlands. They prized their complete freedom with an obvious lack of discipline. They were real troublemakers in the vast empire because, instead of helping nature, they spoiled it without mercy: they killed animals for the mere pleasure of hunting; they poisoned the waters to kill mass quantities of fish; they chased after birds or burned the crops of the faithful servants, even though deep down they knew that they should obey the Almighty Lord.

“One of these thoughtless and idle subjects, however, did not completely disregard his belief in the existence and goodness of the King. After lengthy adventures in the forest to kill defenseless birds when his belly was already filled to the brim, he would comment on his faith in the rich Owner of the vast and valuable realm. ‘A Sovereign as generous as the one who made the waters, lands, trees and flocks must be very wise and just,’ he would explain conscientiously. But he tactfully avoided every decree. He intended to live his own way without any rules, not even those of the one that had given him the valley in which he was living his luxurious and happy existence.

“After a number of years had gone by, when his hands were unable to lift the smallest weapon to harm nature; when his foggy eyes were

unable to make out the landscape with the same clarity as when he was young; when his tired and sad body was bent over toward the ground, he decided to seek out the Lord in order to ask for his protection and support.

“He crossed beautiful fields, where the loyal, hardworking and happy servants were cultivating the soil of the immense estate. Finally, he arrived at the illuminated home of the Sovereign.

“He was greatly surprised to find that the guards wouldn’t let him in because they couldn’t find his name in the book of active servants.

“He implored, begged and whined; however, one of the guards remarked:

‘The King’s spare time is set aside for his workers.’

‘What do you mean?’ cried the lazy subject. ‘I have always believed in the sovereignty and kindness of our glorious ruler.’

But the guard retorted without blinking an eye:

‘What good was such a conviction if you avoided the decrees of our Sovereign, wasting invaluable time upsetting his works? Your past is alive in your current situation. What good did it do to trust in the Lord if you never came to him, offering one minute of collaboration on behalf of everyone else? So you should see that your belief was merely a way of appeasing your conscience for the follies of your heart.’

“And the subject, now compromised by his unworthy deeds and in the poorest of physical health, was forced to begin his task from scratch for his own spiritual renewal.”

The Master fell quiet for a few minutes and then concluded:

“This is a picture of every idle child of God. Will any healthy and intelligent persons who believe in the existence of the Eternal Father, who recognize his power, justice and goodness through the physical expressions of nature, but who do not come to him in simple prayer from time to time or honor his laws with the smallest gesture of aid for their fellow beings, or who do not show the smallest trace of interest in the designs of the Great Sovereign, be able to reap any reward from their dead, pointless convictions?”

With this question, which silenced his listeners, the evening’s Gospel worship came to a close.

Justifiable Argumentation

That evening at Simon's house a veil of sadness covered most everyone's faces.

Thaddeus and Andrew had been attacked a few hours earlier on the banks of the lake by some thugs and they had felt compelled to defend themselves. No serious harm had come of the assault, but they both felt upset and piqued by the attack.

When Jesus began to talk about the glory reserved for good people, the two disciples displayed through discrete tears the bitterness that dominated their souls, and unable to contain himself, Thaddeus complained:

"Lord, I really aspire to serve the Good News, but I have an unruly and ungrateful soul. I listen contritely to the teachings of the Gospel, but out there in the real world, I'm nothing except a spirit that is obstinate in evil. I'm very sorry, but how am I to work on behalf of humankind in such a state?"

Trying to restrain his voice, Andrew hastened to complain in tears:

"Master, what will become of me? By your side I am an obedient sheep, but when I am away from you, all it takes is one meaningless word of misunderstanding to undo me. I can't put up with insult or injury. Is it right for me to continue to teach others to practice the good, when I believe myself to be so bad and imperfect? ..."

Peter interrupted and said:

"On my part, I can see that I am no more than a miserable, indebted and very imperfect spirit. I'm the worst of all. Every night when I go off by myself for my daily prayers, I'm perplexed by the sudden inner courage with which I am embracing my current commitments. My weakness is great; my debts are enormous. How am I to serve the sublime principles of the New Kingdom if I am so

insufficient and incomplete?”

James, the son of Alpheus, added to Peter's comments by asserting downheartedly:

“In the inner chamber of my own conscience, I can see how far I am from truly putting the teachings of the Good News into practice. Many times, after finding comfort in the Master's sermons, I withdraw to my solitary room to delve into the abyss of my wrongs. There are times when I'm suddenly overcome by an awful feeling of disillusionment. Am I really a sincere disciple? Aren't I fooling my neighbor? The uncertainty is pure torture. Could it be that I'm no more than a common hypocrite?”

Other voices could be heard in the upper room, disheartened and full of bitterness.

After making note of their remarks of disappointment and discouragement, Jesus smiled good-naturedly and explained:

“In reality, the paradise that we dream of is still very far away and I don't see any winged disciples here. In my opinion, the angels in heavenly dress have yet to find a home on the rough and dark ground upon which we walk. We are students of the good on the way to the Father, and we shouldn't belittle the blessed opportunity to grow towards Him, just as the grape vine reaches for the sky after being born in the dark bosom of the earth, spreading out mercifully to produce comforting wine for everyone's happiness. If you declare yourselves to be weak, hardened and evil debtors, but are not the first ones to work so that you become strong, redeemed, dedicated and good to benefit the overall work of salvation, it doesn't look to me like the angels should descend from the glory of the Most High to replace you on the field of earth's lessons. Medicine, above all, is for the patient; learning, for the unlearned. Otherwise, I think the Gospel of Salvation would disappear because it is inadequate and useless.”

The disciples' tears turned into a deep blush radiating from all their faces, and a meaningful prayer by the Divine Friend signaled the end of the matter.

The Power of the Darkness

The talk was centered on the study of temptation, and smiling, Jesus recounted:

“An invaluable servant of the Father gallantly moved about the crowded city of sinners with such devotion to faith and charity that the Spirits of Evil grew impatient at witnessing such self-denial and detachment. After laying out the most dangerous snares to no avail, they decided to send a representative to the Spirit of Darkness to find out what he might have to say about it.

“A fellow spirit of blackened conscience took the job and set off.

“The Great Adversary attentively listened to the case and told the Lesser Spirit of Evil to make suggestions.

“The subordinate said emphatically:

‘Couldn’t we strip him of all his worldly possessions?’

‘No, that wouldn’t work,’ said the perverse guide; ‘for a servant of this caliber, the loss of material resources means freedom. Thus, he would find a thousand and one ways to increase his contributions to humanity.’

‘Then, let’s punish his family by breaking it up and forcing his children to fill him with disgrace and ingratitude,’ suggested the lesser troublemaker reticently.

“The greater persecutor, however, let out a frank chuckle and objected:

‘Don’t you see that that would enable him to easily become part of the whole family, which is composed of everyone?’

“The ambassador added in disappointment:

‘Maybe it would work if we flailed his body, riddling it with sores and afflictions.’

‘Nope; nothing like that,’ the satanic spirit added. ‘He would find

ways to stoke his trust in God and would take advantage of the opportunity to bring about the inner renewal of many people with his example of patience and serenity in pain.’

‘So, let’s encourage slander, suspicion and gratuitous hatred against him!’ exclaimed the emissary.

‘Why?’ the Spirit of Darkness replied. ‘Then a lot of people would regard him as a martyr and a redeemer. He would make use of all of the persecution in order to better edify himself in Heaven’s eyes.’

“Now exasperated, the lesser demon suggested:

‘Wouldn’t it be best just to murder him without mercy?’

‘What are you saying?’ the wicked Mind responded. ‘Death would be the sweetest of blessings for him; it would lead him to the light of Heaven.’

“And seeing that the defeated disciple had become humbly silent, the Greater Adversary gave him a meaningful look and advised him glibly:

‘Don’t be so stupid. Go and tell this man that he amounts to zero in Creation, that he is no more than an unknown, tiny grub worm ... Give him to understand his own insignificance so that he will never amount to anything, and you’ll see.’

“The messenger returned satisfied and put the method he had learned into practice.

“It surrounded the brave servant with thoughts of worthlessness regarding his false insignificance, and it fired mental questions at him such as ‘How can you dare believe that your dust-destined deeds have any value? Don’t you feel like you’re a mere plaything of the lower passions of the flesh? Aren’t you ashamed of the animal nature you harbor within your very being? What can one grain of sand lost in the desert do? Can’t you see you’re an obscure speck of clay?’

“The brave collaborator stopped all of his activities, and after listening at length to the dangerous insinuations, he forgot that the leafy olive tree grows from a fragile sprout, and disheartened, he lay down on the bed of despondency and humiliation to awaken only at the hour in which death unveiled the infinity of life to him.”

Jesus fell silent and contemplated the calm night...

Simon Peter said a meaningful prayer, and the apostles and all the others said good night, pensive and astonished.

The Deadly Adversary

During the course of the evening, refreshed by caressing breezes, Philip – with his calloused hands – spoke so emotionally and bitterly about the angst that filled his soul that heartrending notes of pain gripped the gathering. And after being asked respectfully by Peter that they return to the problem of temptation, the Master began the following story:

“The Lord, Our Father, needed a small group of servants in a rebellious and dissolute city, and to that end he found in the middle of it a family of five: father, mother and three children, all who loved him and honored his wise and just laws.

“Once they were situated, the happy collaborators began to serve him wholeheartedly.

“They founded an active center of charity and transforming faith that proved its worth as an important sower of heavenly life, and it stood out so much in its devotion and practice of goodness that the Spirit of the Darkness began to wage a tenacious war against it.

“To begin with, it flailed it with the bats^[1] of slander, but the sincere servants united in tolerance and triumphed.

“Immediately thereafter, he spread the gloom of poverty around them, but the dedicated workers joined together in incessant work and overcame the hardship.

“Then, he tormented them with the serpents of scandal; however, the unknown heroes responded with constructive silence and defeated the dark persecutor.

“After other similar sieges, Satan changed his plan of attack and sent them the demons of vanity, which clothed the Lord’s faithful servants with great social status as if they had reached the pinnacles of power in the blink of an eye; nonetheless, the provident workers were

even more humble and attributed all the glory bestowed on them to the Heavenly Father.

“Next, contemptuous and wicked beings filled their center with valuable assets and money in order to benumb their ability to work, but strong in trust and prayer, the loving group received the money and gifts and passed them on to others to the benefit of the downtrodden and afflicted.

“Exasperated, the Spirit of Darkness sent them the Demon of Depression, who ever so subtly reached the mind of the head of the heroic family and said to him solemnly:

‘You are a man, not an angel... So aren’t you ashamed of yourself for constantly talking about the Lord, when you know your own imperfections so well? More than anything else, try to feel the extent of your weaknesses of the flesh!... Weep about your shortcomings; do penitence before the Eternal One! Grieve your sins... your sins!’

“Minding this warning, the unfortunate man became alarmed and forgot that people can only be useful to the grandeur of the Father through their work in carrying out the will of heaven, and succumbing to profound depression, he believed himself to be irredeemably blameworthy and sinful forever. From the moment in which he believed he was incapable of getting back on his feet, he refused to eat. He lay down and died from sorrow in just a few days.

“Seeing him die under a wave of sorrows and tears, his wife followed in his steps, overcome by unspeakable anguish, and within a few weeks the children took the same pathway.

“And so the deadly adversary overcame the valiant collaborators of faith and love one by one, without needing any other weapon than the little suggestion of sadness.”

The Lord remained silent for quite a while, but none of those present dared make a comment.

Thus, perceiving that his disciples preferred to remain silent, the Divine Friend concluded expressively:

“As long as people have the resources to work and serve with their hands and feet, and with their sentiments and intelligence, the destructive sadness surrounding them is nothing more than a threatening visit from the Spirit of Darkness in his wretched and persistent battle against the light.”

[1] That is, the animal. – Tr.

The Holy Incentive

The fraternal gathering at Peter's house had just begun, when Thaddeus complained angrily about his own weaknesses, stating to the Master:

“How am I supposed to teach the truth if I still feel inclined to lies? What gives me the right to preach the good when I can see that I'm still stuck in evil? How can I praise divine spirituality if my animal nature shouts so loudly?”

The disciple was not asking such questions out of despair or despondency, but out of his great passion for the good that he felt deep down. This was obvious from the inflection of bitterness with which he emphasized his words.

Understanding his frustration, Jesus sympathetically told the following story:

“A holy student of the Law, one of those who are faithfully dedicated to the Truth, was called by the Lord to tasks of prophecy. He earned a living as a merchant of remedies, carrying his healing herbs and elixers from the city to the countryside by using a capricious and unreliable donkey. But when reflecting on his shortcomings, he became profoundly depressed. He concluded that it wasn't right for him to collaborate in revelations from Heaven due to his state of inner impurity, and so he stopped. He attended to his obligations as caretaker of the sick, but he refused to teach the Divine Word to people, regardless of the pleas from those who knew about his gifts of intelligence and inspiration.

“However, sensing that the Heavenly Will was compelling him to perform his task nonetheless, and noting that his mental conflicts were becoming increasingly overwhelming, on one particular night after weeping excessively, he begged for enlightenment from the Almighty.

“He then dreamed that an angel came to him in his work as a merchant. He saw himself leading the headstrong donkey, bent under the weight of its valuable load on a green pathway, when the divine messenger questioned him kindly after the usual greetings:

‘My friend, do you know how many times this animal has kicked today?’

‘A lot,’ he responded without hesitating.

‘How many times has he bitten his stable mates?’ the messenger continued, smiling. ‘And how many times has he insulted the decency of your house and brayed preposterously?’

“And since the dumbfounded disciple was unable to respond immediately, the angel considered:

‘Even so, he is an invaluable helper and should be kept. He carries medicines that save many sick people, distributing hope, health and happiness.’

“And fixing his lucid eyes on the disheartened preacher, he concluded:

‘If, under pretext of being rude and imperfect, this donkey were to refuse to cooperate with you, what would become of the sick people who wait trustingly for you? Go back to the enlightened mission that you forsook, and even though you cannot at this moment in time serve Our Supreme Father as a purified man, attend to your duties nonetheless, spreading comfort and good will like a valuable and useful animal. In the blessings of service, you will be more easily found by the messengers of God, who, in recognizing the good will in your accomplishments of love, will take pity on you, helping your temperament and perfecting it to the degree that you tame and value your unrefined yet priceless ‘donkey’!

“In an instant, the preacher found himself once again in his body, awake and now happy because of the answer from Heaven, which would readjust his erroneous behavior.”

The place was quiet and the disciple looked at the Master thankfully. And after a few minutes of obvious consolation on everyone’s faces, Jesus concluded:

“Work for the good is a holy incentive to strive for perfection. Through it, a sinful soul may open up to Heaven, just as the lily opens up to the light while its roots are still buried in the ground.”

Then, the Master started contemplating the stars sparkling in the

night sky. Thaddeus, overcome with emotion, approached and kissed his hands with tender reverence.

The Message of Compassion

On a clear night, the gathering at Peter's house was focused on the difficulties of dealing with people.

How to spread the values of the Gospel? How to instill the same gift and the same blessing in so many diverse minds?

After a long, fraternal discussion, during which Jesus had remained completely silent, John was concerned about the subject and asked him:

"Lord, what are we supposed to do when slander shreds our hearts?"

"Take pity on the slanderer and work for the good of all," the Heavenly Messenger responded, smiling, "because love undoes the darkness of evil and work destroys disrespectful thoughts."

"Master," asked James, the son of Zebedee, "and how are we to act when someone brutally attacks us?"

"Those who are led by violence," added Christ kindly, "must either be crazy or poisoned. Help them regain their senses."

"Lord," asked Judas with fiery eyes, "and when those who offend us are clothed with respectable authority, whether as a prince or a priest, with all the appearance of a conscientious and normal leader?"

"The serpent can hide itself in a bunch of flowers, and there are worms that live in the most beautiful looking fruit. Those in authority who show that they are violent and cruel are ill. Take pity on them because they are sleeping in a nightmare of dark illusions from which they will have to awaken some day. Help them as best you can and continue on your way, acting for the happiness of all."

"Master, and when our house is hit by crime? What am I supposed to do when faced with someone who has betrayed my trust, who has dishonored my name, or who has shed blood in my home?"

“Pity every type of criminal,” Jesus explained, “and do not desire to break the law that your neighbor has disregarded, because both the persecutor and the criminal in any situation carry a blazing fire with them. One wrong does not right another and blood does not cleanse blood. Forgive and help. Time is responsible for giving back to everyone in accordance with their own effort.”

“Master,” Bartholomew cut in, “what are we to do about the judge who condemns us unfairly?”

“Have mercy on him and continue to cooperate for the good of all those around you. There is always a higher judge who analyzes those who criticize or condemn, and beyond one horizon, other broader and more luminous horizons unfold.”

“Lord,” asked Thaddeus, “what are we supposed to do about the woman we love when she suffers a moral downfall?”

“Jesus gazed at him tenderly and asked in turn:

“Isn’t the inner suffering that afflicts her day and night punishment enough?”

A balsamic silence fell over the group, and when he saw that the disciples didn’t have any more questions, the Lord concluded:

“If we intend to banish ills from the world, we must cultivate the love that sympathizes with the service that edifies for the happiness of all. Do not deceive yourselves. Time is an inflexible instrument of the Law that gives to each of us according to our deeds. No one can hope to right a crime by practicing other crimes, because time changes everything on earth with the fire of suffering or with the ice of death.”

The Glory of Dedication

James, the son of Alpheus, was recounting the natural problems in becoming a disciple, when several others voiced their opinions regarding the difficulties of spiritual growth.

The majority concluded that it is virtually impossible to practice the lessons of the Gospel in a world that is on the wrong side of goodness, selflessness and forgiveness. Most people take pleasure in being avaricious or hardened.

Jesus was being surprisingly quiet as he listened to his disciples' opinions, when Peter asked him directly about the matter:

Jesus thought for a few instants and considered:

“Concerning teaching and spiritual growth, everything depends on the student.”

And then he said kindly:

“In the time of David there was a great artist who played the harp with such perfection that a lot of important people came from afar to hear him play. From time to time, great lords and their cortège would lie around near his tree-encircled house in order to listen to his sublime improvisations. The admirable master gained both fame and fortune, and everyone believed that no one on earth could match his musical skill.

“During his soirées and recitals, he had in his personal service a slave who was apparently inept and foolish, who served water, sweets and fruits to the guests. He never said a word, but focused all his attention on the divine instrument as if he were fascinated by the hands that played it.

“Many years went by, when the artist came home unexpectedly one evening after the banquet of a friend in the neighborhood, and with indescribable wonder, he heard a heavenly melody floating

through the air.

“Someone was playing magnificently in his solitary house, as if it were an angel exiled here on earth.

“Who could the stranger who had taken his place be?

“In tears of emotion at foreseeing the existence of someone with an artistic ability much greater than his own, he slowly went in so as not to be noticed. He was completely shocked when he saw that the marvelous harpist was his foolish old slave, who, using the free time to which he was entitled by law, and without bothering anyone, was practicing his master’s exercises, to which he had been dedicating his vigilant love in moving silence for many years.

“The magnanimous and famous artist set him free and granted him the position that he rightly deserved.”

Faced with the surprised faces of the disciples who had become humbly quiet, the Master concluded:

“The acquisition of noble qualities is the infallible glory of dedication. Every man and every woman who uses their spare time on the ‘harp of life’ – conforming to the wisdom and beauty with which Our Father expresses himself in all corners of the world – will quickly absorb his grandeur and sublimities, thus becoming representatives of Heaven for their brothers and sisters in humanity. But when they work only during the share of time for which they are paid without making any use of the great concessions of time that the Divine Goodness has granted them in the body, they will receive nothing more than the world’s transitory remuneration.”

A Lesson on Essentials

The disciples were discussing the things that were essential for well-being, when, taking over the direction of the conflicting thoughts, the Lord added:

“People need to understand their own happiness so that, if they lose it, they don’t become sad ghosts of lamentation. Removed from the simplest of truths about nature, people immerse themselves in a heavy wave of fanciful artifices, wasting both time and life through unnecessary turmoil.”

And as if he were remembering an incident that would illustrate the matter, he paused for a few moments and then continued:

“There was once an illustrious Roman lady, who was traveling with her five-year-old son from the City of the Caesars to Smyrna in a luxurious galley of her homeland. Upon setting sail, they were accompanied by two slaves loaded down with large bags of various items of jewelry: necklaces and cameos, bracelets and gold hairnets adorned with precious stones, which revealed her predilection for rare adornments. All the personnel in her service bowed down in respect whenever she passed by, such was the impact of the treasure that she had brought on board.

“As soon as the ship was on the high seas, the distinguished lady became the center of everyone’s attention. During cordial get-togethers, she was the object of everyone’s interest because of the shiny ornaments she was wearing.

“The journey was proceeding calmly, when, on one sunny morning, something unexpected happened. The galley hit a treacherous reef and a wide gash opened up, allowing the ocean to pour in. Long hours of struggle ensued with the hopes of being able to repair the damage; then, an even stronger jolt put the ship beyond

repair and lifeboats were lowered to try to save the travelers.

“The illustrious patrician was hurriedly called for.

“The captain calculated their arrival at the next port in two days of risky sailing if the winds were favorable.

“The hopeful and afflicted young matron gave her young son a hug. Within a few moments she reached a small life boat, holding the child and a small packet of what her travel companions believed to be her most valuable jewels. However, when she showed the contents to the few friends in misfortune who were with her, she exclaimed:

‘My son is my most valuable possession and this is what I consider as the most useful.’ The small bag contained two loaves and ten ripe figs, with which the small group of castaways were fed during the painstaking hours that separated them from dry land.”

The Master rested for a few seconds and then added:

“True happiness is not based on transitory riches, because a day always comes when people are forced to part with the external goods that are most dear to their hearts. Foolish people become attached to lands and mills, money and honors, wines and pleasures as if they will never have to settle accounts with death. The prudent spirit, however, realizes that all worldly goods should be used for enriching one’s virtues, and that the simplest blessings of nature are the basis for our essential tranquility. So, let us seek the Kingdom of God and its righteousness, keeping on the earth that which is vitally necessary for the upkeep of our physical life; then, all joy will be added unto us.”

The Need for Action

The disciples were heatedly discussing the need of preparation for the Divine Kingdom.

Philip discretely emphasized the need for meditation. James the Elder suggested spiritual retreat. The disciples of the renewing movement thought that they should isolate themselves in a place inaccessible to sin. John opted for ceaseless worship, going so far as to suggest that everyone should abandon their professional activities so that they could chant endless hosannas to the Most-Beloved Father. Bartholomew pointed out the need for incessant fasting and refraining from any contact with unclean people.

Called upon by Simon to please say something, Jesus asked:

“Peter, what kind of water causes pestilential miasmas?”

“Well, of course,” the apostle responded intrigued, “useless, stagnant water.”

Smiling, he asked the son of Alpheus:

“James, what kind of fish floats motionless on the waves?”

“A dead fish, Lord” replied the disciple, disappointed.

“Bartholomew, what kind of land is filled with briars that prevent the sowing of a crop?”

The disciple thought and thought, and then answered:

“Indisputably, it is good soil that has been neglected, because dry, rocky soil is nearly always unproductive.”

The Master showed that he was sincerely satisfied and turned his attention to Thaddeus:

“Thaddeus, what kind of tunic becomes a nest of destructive moths?”

“One that is never worn.”

Nodding toward Judas, he asked:

“What happens to the buried talent?”

“It is wasted because it is useless, Lord.”

Next, he looked at one of the sons of Zebedee and said more incisively:

“James, where do serpents and wolves seek shelter?”

“In ruins or other places that have been abandoned.”

“Andrew,” Christ said, gazing at Peter’s brother, “what is the purpose of yeast?”

“Master, the mission of yeast is to give life to the loaf.”

Then, resting his piercing yet gentle gaze on his disciples, he added good-naturedly:

“The Temple is full of worshippers, yet Jerusalem is surrounded by misery. If the light is not used to drive out the darkness, if bread is kept from the starving, and if medicine is withheld from the sick, where can we find benefit in the work we propose to do? The Divine Kingdom holds the need for action as a fundamental order. Let us continue onwards and let us spread the redemptive truth through our thoughts, words, deeds and lives. The All-Wise One created the seed to produce without end. The light of the sun comes down each and every day to drive darkness from the earth. The ministry of the Good News is nothing more than that. To love by serving is to worship the Father above all things; and to serve by loving is to help our neighbor as ourselves. To abide by these guidelines as we progress towards redemption is to practice the whole Law.”

The Priceless Tree

The Lord was pointing out the fact that the construction of the Divine Kingdom would be a work of fraternal union among everyone of good will, when old Zebedee, who really loved Christ's moral allegories, asked him for some type of symbolic story, through which all those present might understand better what he was talking about.

Benevolent as always, Jesus smiled and recounted:

“There was a time when people lived in constant conflict along with misery, confusion and suffering. So, the merciful Father sent them a messenger, the bearer of sublime seeds from the Tree of Happiness and Peace. The angel came down with the regal gift, and gathering all the people together for the festive delivery, it explained to them that the glorious plant would produce flowers of light and fruits of gold in the future, bringing an end to disagreement, but it would require special care in order to grow strong. While it was germinating, everyone's help was vital in the exceptional care of love and watchfulness.

“The seeds would need suitable soil, a perfected watering system, a certain type of fertilizer, constant protection against harmful insects, and various other measures during the difficult time of the beginning. The plant, however, was so precious in and of itself that all it would take was one victorious specimen and blessed peace and happiness would overflow the community in general. Its branches would shelter everyone; its fragrance would envelop the earth in tender harmony, and its fruit could be used to guarantee the well-being of the entire world.

“After the angel had entrusted the miraculous seeds to the people, all the onlookers went back to their homes, selfishly dreaming about possessing the tree with the flowers of light and the fruit of gold. They

all planned to have the rarity exclusively for their own use. In order to do so, they eagerly isolated themselves on their lands and planted the seeds in hopes of personal and absolute ownership of the treasure solely out of heartfelt vanity.

“In order to live, the tree demanded complete fraternal cooperation, but the destructive conflicts continued.

“Due to their divine nature, the seeds did not go to waste; however, if some of the growers had water, they didn’t have fertilizer, and the ones who had fertilizer didn’t have enough water. The ones who had resources to defend against parasites didn’t have access to suitable soil, and those who had the best land didn’t have the means to watch over it. The owners of water and fertilizer, of land and defensive elements, as well as the rest of the candidates for possession of the heavenly wealth, began a full-blown war, mutually wiping each other out.”

The Master made a long pause in the unusual story and added:

“This is the symbol of the futile war of humans to the detriment of happiness. The Father’s talents have been granted to his children indiscriminately so that they might learn to partake of his eternal gifts with understanding and harmony. Some have intelligence; others, reflection; some guard the earth’s gold; others, sublime knowledge; some hold authority; others experience. But they are all out to win by themselves, not to disseminate the good with others through heroism in virtue, but to humiliate those who are bringing up the rear.”

And gazing at Zebedee significantly, he concluded:

“When true unity becomes voluntary amongst all people on the redeeming path of sanctifying work for the natural good, then the Kingdom of Heaven will shine on the earth like the divine tree with flowers of light and fruit of gold.”

The old Galilean smiled in satisfaction, and did not ask any more questions.

The Disturbed Educator

Andrew, the helpful apostle, was commenting on how hard it was to adjust to living according the new truths, when Jesus told the following story for everyone's edification:

“There was once a remarkably strong man who was a specialist in various types of services of reparation and readjustment. He was invited by an angel to help mend a crippled man who longed to enter Heaven, and he accepted the job.

He approached the infirm man with hammer in hand, and despite the cries and tears that his work drew out of the unfortunate man, he helped him to improve on a daily basis until he fulfilled his commitment.

“The divine messenger was pleased and asked him to help a lame elderly woman who eagerly wished to enter the Heavenly Court.

“Indifferent to the groans of the old woman, the stout worker imposed healing discipline on her, and gradually got her in shape to ascend to the Sublime Realms.

“The jubilant minister of the Most High then asked for his help to restore a sore-covered and afflicted man who yearned for Edenic beatitude.

“The repairman didn't hesitate.

“Completely deaf to the unfortunate man's complaints, he attentively and rigorously lanced his sores, putting him in the position to ascend to heaven.

“When that job was done, the angel returned and asked for his cooperation on behalf of a young boy who was lost in bad habits.

“The restorer took the lad under his wing and gave him work and self-restraint with such a level of training that, in no time at all, the task was completed.

“And so, the Heavenly messenger asked him to help with various complex cases of physical and moral restructuring until, one day, the distinguished educator, weary of his imperfect life on the earth, begged the angelic administrator for permission to go with him to heaven.

“The sublime ambassador examined him in detail and told him that he needed to prepare himself with the great event in mind; he pointed out his deformed feet, his deficient arms and his defective eyes. This time he asked him to readjust himself in order to ascend to heaven.

“The disciplinarian began the task of self-betterment, hopeful and optimistic. However, his old hammer now wounded his own flesh so roughly that, instead of mending his feet, arms and eyes, he fell to the floor nearly paralyzed and half blind, haplessly and unsubmitively, writhing in pain, speaking blasphemies and spewing insults at God and the world.

“He was unable to bear the saving treatment that he had applied to others, so much so that even his angel friend had an extremely hard time telling who he was because he looked so different.

“Having finished the lengthy test to which he had subjected the unfortunate man, the messenger of the Eternal One had no other recourse but to entrust him to other educators for the readjustment he needed by using the same salutary strictness with which he had treated others, so that the distinguished repairman could be perfected suitably enough to enter Paradise.”

Noting the surprised looks on everyone’s faces, the Lord concluded:

“Let us use patience and love in all our tasks of correction, and let us learn to bear the measures with which we seek to improve the position of those around us, because for every spirit the time comes when it must be effectively and safely polished up for the Divine Light.”

The Common Good

In the midst of a crystal clear night, the disciples were gathered in Peter's house, discussing the difficulties involved in spreading redemptive ideas.

A lot of people were taking advantage of Jesus' help, seeking personal gain. One particular merchant was encouraging people to assemble in a certain area of the shore in order to increase the sale of his wines. Common wagon drivers were intensifying the advertising of the Heavenly Kingdom in the surrounding areas, not with the goal of growing spiritually but in order to rent various vehicles to visiting patients who were seeking the Master's aid.

The opinion of nearly all of the apostles was one of alarm and discouragement.

That was when the Divine Friend began to speak:

"There was once a philosopher who immersed himself in the studies of the Divine Revelation. He had a disciple who was never happy with people's incomprehension with regards to the heavenly truths. He was always getting angry at the evildoers, the ingrates or the hypocrites who were misusing his elevated teachings.

"His master listened to him in silence, until one fine morning there was a sudden summer downpour. The master invited him to go on a short stroll to the neighboring field after the countryside had recovered from the rain.

"They hadn't even walked half a mile, when they caught sight of a wide strip of swampland, and noticing that the quagmire was receiving the rain water, the teacher explained:

"Thus, the mud hole receives the heavenly liquid and turns it into a dirty broth, but there are frogs and toads that will safely and effectively benefit from it. If it didn't rain, these dark waters would

probably become toxic.

“After a few more steps, they found full puddles in the recesses of hardened earth. The teacher studied them and added:

“Here, the gushing fount from the sky is now unpleasant mud, but what would become of this sterile ground if the divine water didn’t visit it? Tomorrow, we might see in this soil a flowering display of fragrant wild lilies.

“They proceeded further and stopped to examine some bare trees. The water on the dried-out branches appeared to be gray and fetid, but the teacher explained:

“The blessing of the crystal rain came down heavily and somberly on these forsaken trees. But what would happen to them if the gifts from heaven didn’t benefit them at all? Perhaps in no time at all they would die down to their roots. A few weeks from now, however, they will be covered with lush branches, acting as blessed homes for the birds.

“They continued on and came upon some peach trees, whose blossoms held the drops from the sky with such beauty that within them they looked more like diamond-like dew, slightly iridescent in the bright sunlight. The master pointed at them and said:

“Here, the pure petals have retained the heavenly gift with absolute faithfulness, and soon they will become fragrant and beautiful with excellent fruit for the banquet of life.

“Immediately afterwards, casting his eyes over the extensive landscape, he said to the amazed disciple:

“Never criticize the fountainhead of heavenly aid. Each person receives a measure of it on the plane on which they live. In harboring its sublime principles, the criminal becomes less cruel; the worst appears less bad; the imperfect improves; the unfortunate person finds relief and the good ones improve to better carry out the service of Our Father. If you possess enough understanding to discern reality, don’t waste your time on empty rebuke. Learn from the Supreme Lord, who constantly helps in accordance with each person’s spiritual standing and need. Distribute to all those around you the gifts of Heaven that you have already faithfully retained, and heaven will open up endless treasures to you.”

Having finished the story, Jesus fell silent.

As if they had received a sublime lesson in such few words, the

disciples, silent and happy, looked at one another expressively.

Then the Lord blessed them and left for the banks of the lake, gazing pensively at the stars glimmering in the distance...

The Redemptive Journey

Initiating that evening's enjoyable Gospel-centered conversation, Zebedee's wife reverently asked Jesus:

“Lord, how will our journey to the Divine Kingdom happen?”

Christ appeared to concentrate for a few moments and explained:

“In a valley in a far-off country, there were a number of Jews who were blind from birth. Accustomed to darkness and poverty, they had lived for many years in their cave, when an enlightened brother of their race came along and told them about the profound beauty of Mount Zion in Jerusalem, where the chosen people worshipped the Supreme Father. After listening to his story, all the blind people were greatly upset and lamented their impossible situation; their seer friend, however, explained to them that their situation was not hopeless. If they had the courage to apply themselves to certain disciplines, and if they abstained from the various lower nature pleasures to which they had grown accustomed in the darkness, they would be able to regain contact with the light and go to the holy city.

“Most of his listeners viewed his suggestions with obvious sarcasm, asserting that their parents and other ancestors had also been blind, and that it was impossible for them to regain the use of their eyes.

“One of them, however, a brave and serene young man, believed in the recommended method and put it to use.

“He began devoting himself to the required disciplines, and after four years of meditation, hard work and personal obedience to the Law, along with fasting and prayer, he received his sight.

“He almost went out of his mind with joy.

“In ecstasy, he told his companions about the sublimity of the experience, commenting on the spaciousness of the sky and the beauty

of the nearby trees, but no one believed him.

“Even though everyone thought he was crazy, the young man didn’t get discouraged.

“He was now able to make out the path and he would be able to progress on his way.

“He left the deep valley, but without any notion of direction, he wandered around for days and nights in a troubled state. Set upon by great numbers of wolves and vipers, he saw how inexperienced he was, so he exercised the greatest caution until one morning, in order to gather wild honey, he approached a hiding place carved out in the rock and was held up by a thief who demanded him to hand over his moneybag. But since he had no money, he agreed to be enslaved by the malefactor, who for five long years kept him in incessant work. However, he acted with such kindness and demonstrated so much selflessness that his persecutor changed and became mellow. Converting to the good, he gave him back his freedom.

“Free once again, the faithful believer started out once more because the desire to reach the divine temple filled his mind.

“He started out, distributing fraternity and happiness to all travelers who crossed his path. But upon reaching a small village where the law was enforced with excessive severity, he was arrested as an unknown criminal. Knowing that he would be betrayed by his lack of strength if he tried to escape, he let them lock him up until the problem could be resolved, which, in fact, took a long time. Nonetheless, he was never inactive in exercising the good. In the very jail that had wounded his innocence, he found numerous opportunities to demonstrate good will, love and tolerance. The authorities were really impressed and finally set him free.

“The desire to reach the sublime sanctuary absorbed his thoughts and he continued on his way. But only after twenty years of struggle and trial – over which he was always victorious – was he able to reach Mount Zion in order to worship the Supreme Lord.”

The Master paused, glanced around the silent room and concluded:

“Such is the journey to the Heavenly Kingdom.

“Above all, people must realize that they are blind and apply to themselves the remedy prescribed in the divine commandments. Upon attaining understanding, despite the ridicule of all the ignorant people

around them, they must press onward alone – almost always alone – from the dark terrestrial valley to the mount of divine light, making use of every opportunity to serve indiscriminately even their enemies and persecutors. When followers of the good understand their duty to silently mobilize all of their resources on the journey without wasting any time on complaining or criticizing – which only indicate a low level of spiritual growth – will they then be in a position to reach the Kingdom in the shortest amount of time possible, because they will continue molding their wings for the divine flight by using self-discipline and unceasing work for the peace and happiness of all.”

In Prayer

On the eve of the Lord's departure for Sidon, the Gospel service at Peter's house had taken on an air of understandable melancholy. The edifying study would proceed, but the work of the revelation in some way or another would experience a natural interruption.

With obvious emotion, Matthew read the moving pages from Isaiah, but on that night of farewells, no one had any questions.

A look of untranslatable expectation appeared on everyone's faces.

The Master, on his part, refrained from making any comments, but at the end of the meeting, he raised his lucid eyes to heaven and prayed fervently:

"Father, kindle your Divine Light around all those who have neglected your blessing in the darkness of the earthly journey.

"Help those who have forgotten to share the leftover bread on their full tables.

"Help those who are unashamed to flaunt their happiness in the face of poverty and misfortune.

"Help those who forget to thank their benefactors.

"Take pity on those who sleep in the nightmares of vice, bequeathing a dolorous inheritance to those who are embarking upon the human journey.

"Uplift those who have forgotten the duty to serve their neighbor.

"Take pity on the wise that hide their intelligence within the four walls of their domestic paradise.

"Awaken those who dream of controlling the world, not realizing that, compared with Eternity, their life in the flesh is merely one minute between the cradle and the grave.

"Uplift those who have fallen, defeated by an excess of material comfort.

“Correct those who spread sadness and pessimism amongst their fellow beings.

“Forgive those who have turned down the opportunity for peace, and who go through life disseminating rebelliousness and disorder.

“Intervene on behalf of all those who believe that they possess fantastic power and insanely deem themselves to be judges, condemning their very own brothers and sisters.

“Awaken the troubled souls who poison the path of others with the spiritual aggression of untimely acts.

“Extend your paternal hands to all those who have forgotten about the sentence of death – the renewer of life – which your law has engraved on the precarious body.

“Enlighten those who have lost themselves in the darkness of hatred and revenge, of wayward ambition and cold cruelty, and who believe they are powerful and free, when they are nothing more than slaves worthy of compassion before your sublime will.

“All of them, Father, are wrongdoers who elude the courts of earth, but who are singled out by your Sovereign and Perfect Justice for crimes of forgetfulness before the Infinite Good.”

At this point he ended his remarkable prayer.

Nearly all those present, including the Master himself, displayed eyes wet with tears, and up above, the radiant moon in its divine fullness shone its beams down on Simon’s humble home, appearing to silently weep because so many could live their lives forgetting about the Supreme Lord; but even so, the loving and righteous Father of Infinite Goodness and Perfect Justice would continue to watch over them...



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