

THE STORY OF CHRIST

BY GIOVANNI PAPINI

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THE CLOUD

Once more they returned to Jerusalem leaving their nets, this time forever, travelers setting out upon a journey, the stages of which were to be marked by blood.

In the same place where He had gone down to the city glorified by men, in the shade of blossoming branches. He was to rise again after the interval of His dishonor and His resurrection, in the glory of Heaven. He remained in the midst of men, for forty days after the resurrection, for as long a time as He had remained in the desert after His symbolic death by water.

He did not, as before, lead a life in common with the Disciples, because He was separated now from the life of living men; but He reappeared to them more than once to confirm His great promises, and perhaps to explain to those most capable of receiving them those mysteries which were not written down in any book but were passed on under the seal of secrecy through all the apostolic period and the following periods, and were imperfectly set down later under the title of Arcana Disciplina.

The last time they saw Him was on the Mount of Olives, where before His death He had prophesied the ruin of the Temple and of the city and the signs of His return, and where, in the darkness of night and of anguish, Satan, before his final defeat, had left Him wet with sweat and blood. It was one of the last evenings of May and the clouds in that golden hour, like golden celestial islands in the gold of the setting sun, seemed to rise from the warm earth towards near-by Heaven, like incense from great fragrant offerings. In the distance, the birds began to call back the fledglings to the nests, and the cool breeze lightly shook the branches and their drooping, unripened fruit. From the distant city, still intact, from the pinnacles, the towers and the white squares of the Temple rose a smoky cloud of dust.

And once again the Disciples asked Jesus the question which they had put to Him in the same place on the evening of the two prophecies. Now that He had come back as He had promised, what else were they to await?

"Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" They may have meant the Kingdom of God, which in their minds, as in the minds of the Prophets, was one with the Kingdom of Israel, since the divine restoration of the earth was to begin with Judea.

Christ answered: "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in His own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth."

And having said this, He lifted up His hands and blessed them. And while they beheld, He was taken up from the earth and suddenly a shining cloud as on the morning of the Transfiguration wrapped Him about and hid Him from their sight. But they could not look away from the sky and continued to gaze steadfastly up in their astonishment, when two men in white apparel spoke to them: "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven."

Then having prayed in silence, they returned to Jerusalem, glowing with melancholy joy, thinking of the day just begun: the first day of a task which, after two thousand years, is not yet accomplished. They were alone now, alone against that innumerable enemy called the World. But Heaven is not so cut off from the earth as before the coming of Christ; the mystic ladder of Jacob is no longer a lonely man's dream, but is set up on the earth, on this earth which we tread, and above there is an Intercessor who does not forget the ephemeral beings destined to eternal life who, for a time, were His brothers. "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" had been one of His last promises and the greatest. He had ascended into Heaven, but Heaven was no longer merely the barren dome where swift, tumultuous storm-clouds appear and disappear; where the stars shine out silently, like the souls of saints.

He is still with us, the Son of Man, who to be nearer Heaven ascended mountains, who was light made manifest, who died, raised above the earth towards the blackness of Heaven, and rose from the dead to ascend into Heaven in the peacefulness of evening, and who will return again on the clouds of Heaven. He is still present in the world which He meant to free. He

is still attentive to our words, if they truly come from the depths of our hearts, to our tears if they are tears of blood in our hearts before being salt drops in our eyes. He is with us, an invisible, benignant guest, never more to leave us, because by His wish our earthly life is an anticipation of the Kingdom of Heaven, and is a part of Heaven from this day on. Christ has taken to Himself as His eternal possession that rough foster-mother of us all, that sphere which is but a point in the infinite and yet contains hope for the infinite; and today He is closer to us than when He ate the bread of our fields. No divine promise can be blotted out: the May cloud which hid Him from sight, still hovers near the earth, and every day we raise our weary and mortal eyes to that same Heaven from which He will descend in the terrible splendor of His glory.

TO BE CONTINUED

WOMEN'S IMMODEST DRESS

By Mgr. Enrico Pucci (Rome Correspondent, N. C. W. C.)

The Holy Father again has renewed his condemnation of immodest, un-Christian fashions, on the occasion of receiving a large Spanish delegation of pilgrims which included many ladies and young girls of the aristocracy.

His Holiness invited his guests to join in a crusade, by example and word, against the prevailing tendency of today to go beyond the limits of modesty in dress. Enthusiastic applause greeted his words, and there is confidence that they were received and understood in the proper spirit.

Similar admonitions were given by the Pontiff only recently, when he received a pilgrimage of expurgated of the Dames du Sacre Cour who came to Rome for the canonization of St. Madeleine Sophie Barat, founder of the congregation. The pilgrims were warmly exhorted to practice Christian modesty. He himself, he said, had been obliged to close the doors of his paternal house to some of his daughters, good in other respects, who failed to show that great sentiment of the Christian woman, modesty. He had not repented of this severity; some were offended at first, but his position soon received general applause, not all of it from Catholic sources. In conclusion, he said, he was confident all those present would consecrate themselves to this purifying mission of modesty.

POPE CONSISTENT AND FIRM

Since the days of his pontificate, Pope Pius XI. has been an apostle for modesty in women's dress. A few months after his exaltation, he gave strict orders that no woman clad in too worldly a manner should be admitted to his audiences.

While this order was in exact accord with Christian teaching and tradition through the centuries, there was some objection. It was pointed out that Pope Benedict XV. had never issued rules to govern women's dress, but those who brought out this point failed to remember that in the days of Pope Benedict women's fashions were not so extreme. Others objected that the women must follow the fashions or be ridiculous.

But Pope Pius never wavered from his stand, strong in his conviction of right. Several ladies were refused admittance to the Pontifical Apartments because they had not observed the rules of Christian decency in their dress. To prevent embarrassment or misunderstanding, the Maestro di Camera had printed on the back of the admittance cards a figure of a woman in costume for audience, with the notation that it was not the intent to prescribe the style but to illustrate the rules with regard to the height of the neck of the dress and the length of sleeves and skirt. As a result of the Holy Father's insistence, it is now extremely rare for a woman to present herself at the Vatican clad in an unbecoming manner.

The Vicariat (administration of dioceses) at Rome, following the Holy Father's lead, gave strict orders for the admission of women to the churches. These were printed in large red letters on cards and hung in prominent places in the entrances of the basilicas, churches and chapels. Women who did not conform were threatened with expulsion. The bishops of many of the Italian dioceses took like measures.

As a result, one incident took place at the Cathedral of Milan where a woman was asked to leave, resisted and finally acquiesced. The newspapers commenting on the incident generally agreed with the priest. At Rome the pious and learned Cardinal Billot, when distributing Holy Communion, three or four times passed by women who had come to the sacred table improperly dressed. The severe lesson had its effect.

In his "sacred invitation" for Pentecost, the Cardinal Vicar insisted on the absolute necessity of a return to a more Christian manner of dressing, again in conformity with the Supreme Pontiff's policy. "The too frivolous facility with which Christian modesty is offended in our day," said the venerable cardinal, "commands the serious consideration of those who, as we have the care and responsibility of the eternal health of souls, and who

have to render an account to God if they keep silence when they are obligated to warn sinners. This is precisely the reason for the necessity to speak strongly against the invading paganism to which so many women and girls foolishly surrender themselves in their habits of life, attitudes, amusements and manner of dress, in complete contrast with the teaching of the Gospel and even of natural morals, and in every respect incompatible with the dignity and chastity which belong to women and to their mission in their families and in society.

"It is a question of grave danger and serious harm. There is no excuse of usefulness, convenience, social necessity, because there is too much manifestly repugnant in the immodest and immoral fashions of dressing which the world, contrary to the spirit of the Lord, wishes to substitute for honesty and correctness of costume."

APPEAL TO FATHERS AND MOTHERS

His Eminence, defending himself against the accusation of severity, appealed to the consciences of Christian fathers and mothers, and bespoke the cooperation of all women's organizations to arrest this new paganism which, as he said, adorns the body to the detriment of the soul and shows a serious moral decadence in family and society.

These are some reflections of the Holy Father's stand against immodesty in dress. Now, however, with pilgrims coming from every land for the Holy Year, he is finding it possible to sow the seed of modesty directly in many souls who may be expected to take it back to their own lands with them, and thus make the crusade still more worldwide.

THE CROAGH PATRICK PILGRIMAGE

PILGRIMS FLOCK TO ERIN'S HOLY MOUNTAIN

By J. H. Cox (Dublin Correspondent, N. C. W. C.)

The Croagh Patrick Pilgrimage, which traditionally takes place on July, is not a protracted ordeal of days and nights, like that of Lough Derg. Zealous Catholics, it is true, go to the mountain at any time. But one Sunday in the month is especially marked for the devotion, and then the pilgrims flock from every direction. The stern note of rigor, peculiar to Irish pilgrimages, is not wanting. Those thousands of pilgrims make the toilsome night ascent of the heights to catch the rising sun, and then together they pray on the spot where the saint prayed fifteen hundred years ago.

The late Archbishop McEvilly thought the effort too severe. He asked Papal sanction to change the place of pilgrimage to a more accessible center, and in 1883 his petition was granted, the Holy See conferring indulgences on all who would visit a church which the prelate of the diocese was free to designate.

PRESTIGE IS SAFEGUARDED

The archbishop's successor, the learned and uncompromising Dr. Healy, read the sanction his own way.

"There is nothing," he said, "to prevent the Bishop from designating the little oratory on the summit of the mountain itself. I do not wish to see this ancient pilgrimage impaired. It is practically impossible to transfer such pilgrimages to other places, as we have learned from the diminishing numbers of the pilgrims since the new spot was chosen."

God and Patrick blessed the old pilgrimage and its pilgrims. That blessing shall be continued to those of today, for henceforth I authorize the celebration to take place every year on the very summit of the Reek. Nothing can alter the prestige of Patrick's Holy Mountain.

So the pilgrimage was changed back to Croagh Patrick. The object of the pilgrims is, of course, to imitate in minor form the fasting and hardship that the Saint endured on the peak. Croagh Patrick is regarded as the Sinai of Ireland. Throughout the district the national apostle has left, as it were, his foot-prints. While an organizer of genius, with a rare capacity for utilizing the gifts of others, he was a great personal worker, and his energy was unabated even in his old age. His journeys through the country, right and left, are a study of unending interest. For the moment one can just refer to his itinerant labors in the West.

TRAVELS OF NATIONAL SAINT

The Saint had passed through Galway County, leaving a track of new churches as he went along. Gradually he reached Mayo County, and there built four large stone churches, the sites of which can still be identified. The holy wells where he baptized multitudes also are known. The word "patrick" appended to the name of more than one locality, preserves the tradition that the saint passed that way. Sometimes even the length of his stay has been noted by oral history, and curiously confirmed afterward by precise facts gleaned from old inscriptions.

At the village now called Aghagower, St. Patrick can be said with something like certainty to have spent the latter part of the year 440 and the beginning of 441. He had

preached the Gospel from Antrim down to Tara, and from Tara across to that remote nook of the West.

The sympathy of friendship sprang up between the old man and those Connaught people. He yearned to remain with them for the rest of his life. But it was not to be. His own simply written record tells us what the angel told him. "Thou shalt have everything round which thou shalt go, and though thou art weary thou shalt go on."

DIVINE COMMAND TO PATRICK

Archbishop Healy expounds the thought. "Round the whole island he had to go, to the crests of its soaring hills, across its estuaries and rushing waters, over its spreading plains, through its roughest woods and glens, from the very summit of Croagh Patrick to the wild shores of the northern seas, through the plains of Kildare and the hills of Wicklow, over all Munster to the Shannon mouth—he was to go over them all, preaching and baptizing; but they were all to be his own forever, and no one would ever be allowed by God to snatch them from his hand."

At Aghagower, the great human traits of the man often came into play. His love for animals was such that the singled out a pair of trout that frequented the stream near the roadside, and they became his pets. He had left the village and had got to Murrisk when his car driver died suddenly. In their pagan fashion, the simple people buried him. The saint came to the grave and raised him from the dead.

Patrick was now at the foot of the mountain which will always bear his name. He made the ascent on the Saturday before Ash Wednesday and remained there until the eve of Easter Sunday. The year was 441. It is possible to fix the time with absolute accuracy. The Tripartite states that when Patrick was on the mountain he received news that Leo the Great had become Pope, and immediately he sent his nephew to pay homage to the new Pontiff and to give an account of his own mission. Leo was consecrated Pope in 440, and it was in the following spring that the news travelled to the Saint doing penance on the Reek. So the year is beyond question.

THE SINAI OF IRELAND

What did the penance amount to? The query is answered by Archbishop Healy, the best modern authority:

"He abode there in much discomfort, without drink and without food, from Shrove Saturday to Holy Saturday. He was exposed day and night to all the fury of the elements—wind, rain, occasional sun, and not improbably much snow and hail. He had the poor shelter of four stones round him. And at night, when he sought to rest, his head was pillowed on a flag, the five stones making the shape of a rude cross. Great discomfort, surely, of body, and no doubt much anguish of mind. But it is by the Cross the saints reach glory. All our ancient writers compare Patrick on the Reek to Moses on Mount Sinai."

The saint's ordeal on the mountain passed from history into poetry and legend. In the symbolism of the birds he is pictured fighting flocks of black vultures, and banishing them and all other vicious things by the sound of his bell, till at last the creatures of evil were completely swept away, and the whole summit of the mountain was filled with beautiful white birds. The Book of Armagh concludes the story: "Now get thee gone," said the angel who came to console him. "You have suffered, but you have been comforted!"

It is a common belief that it was from the Reek of Croagh Patrick that the saint drove all the poisonous snakes and other reptiles into the sea, so that none has ever since been found on Irish soil. The tradition is very ancient. It was referred to by English and Continental writers as far back as the Twelfth century. Among the promises made to the saint on the summit, two may be mentioned: The alien was never to obtain permanent dominion over the men of Erin. Sea waves were to spread over Ireland seven years before the Judgment Day, and drive its people from the reign of Antichrist.

TYPE OF IRELAND'S FAITH

The saint was the first pilgrim of the mountain, and from his own time to the present day the stream of pilgrims has been flowing. The late Archbishop Healy will be remembered for having given the pilgrimage a great modern impetus. "I love the Reek with a kind of personal love," he said, "not merely on account of its graceful symmetry and soaring pride, but because it is Patrick's holy mountain, the scene of his prayers for our fathers and for us, the symbol of Ireland's enduring Faith during many woeful centuries.

"When the skies are clear, no eye can turn to gaze on it without delight. Even when rain clouds shroud its brow, we know it is still there. Storms sweep over it, and it emerges again in all its calm beauty and strength. It is the type of Ireland's Faith, Ireland's Nationhood, which nothing has shaken and, with God's help, nothing can destroy."

Satan gets entrance for his full power in the final moment there is a shade of distrust in God.

16TH CENTENNIAL OF NICAEA COUNCIL

(By N. C. W. C. News Service)

Rome, July 26.—It is the desire of the Holy Father that important celebrations be scheduled for the fall of the year so that pilgrims to Rome who have not witnessed imposing functions such as the canonization and beatification ceremonies may see something of the majesty of church functions in St. Peter's. Plans are being made for a celebration on a vast scale of the sixteenth centennial of the Council of Nicaea. The ceremonies will open with a Pontifical function in St. Peter's, celebrated in the Greek Rite. Plans are now being made for the ceremony by the Congregation for the Oriental Church and the exact date of the celebration will be announced later.

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