

CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHT – THE NIGHT IN WHICH HE WAS BETRAYED

Our Lord had foretold His Passion again and again, but vaguely, naming no time. Now, on the Wednesday of this week, He said to the Twelve:

"You know that after two days shall be the Pasch, and the Son of Man shall be delivered up to be crucified." His enemies, too, were preparing for the end. On Wednesday the Sanhedrists met at the house of Caiaphas to make their final plans. They dared not take Jesus by force nor in the Temple; for this would provoke the people and draw down their anger upon themselves. If only they could seize Him secretly and get the Romans to make away with Him!

Whilst they were considering how this could be brought about, they were told that a man, one of the common sort, craved admittance. He entered with signs of profound reverence, having come, he said, in obedience to their command that whoever should know where Jesus of Nazareth was should declare it to them.

"What will you give me," he asked, "and I will deliver Him unto you?" He told them that as one of His disciples he was constantly with Him, knew His secrets, and would be able to do the business for them quietly and securely. Bad as these men were, and delighted at this unexpected succour, they could scarcely disguise their contempt for the traitor. They accepted his services, however, and for thirty pieces of silver, about \$19.50 of our money, he agreed to deliver his Master into their hands as soon as he should find a convenient opportunity when there was no one about to help Him. Thus were the words of the prophet Zacharias fulfilled:

"And they weighed for my wages thirty pieces of silver, a handsome price that I was prized at by them." How had Judas come to this? Because of that one evil passion which he did not try to conquer. His fall was not sudden. At the time of his call he would have been horrified at the thought of such a crime. But his heart had hardened gradually, and at last, when temptation came, he betrayed and sold for a few pieces of silver the Master for whom he had left all things.

Whilst Judas in Jerusalem was plotting with the Sanhedrists, our Lord in the quiet home of Bethany was preparing His disciples for His coming Passion and Death. Probably His Blessed Mother was there, too. He had told her what was to happen to Him, and though her heart was breaking, she did not try like Peter to save Him from suffering and a cruel death, but bravely and generously accepted the Will of God.

On Thursday morning the disciples came to Jesus, saying:

"Where wilt Thou that we prepare for Thee to eat the Pasch?" Judas quietly drew near to hear the answer. Jesus said:

"Go ye into the city, and there shall meet you a man carrying a pitcher of water. Follow him into the house where he entereth in. And you shall say to the good man of the house: The Master saith to thee, Where is the guest-chamber where I may eat the Pasch with My disciples? And he will show you a large dining-room furnished, and there prepare." Judas was baffled, but, as keeper of the purse, he would probably be sent, and he stood forward ready.

No, Peter and John were to go, and he was foiled again. That Supper Room was to be the scene of holiest mysteries; our Lord was not going to have them disturbed nor the house of His entertainer invaded by Judas' armed band. At His own time and in another place He would suffer Himself to be taken, and in the meantime the traitor was kept in the dark.

Entering the City, Peter and John see the man with the pitcher on his head, and follow him, not without difficulty, through the narrow, thronged streets. Jews out of every nation under heaven, nearly three millions of them, are here—too many by far to be housed within the walls, though every house is taxed to its utmost. Late comers are camping out on Olivet and all the country round as far as Bethany. What variety of costume, and what a Babel of tongues! Here, in bright armour, come a body of Roman soldiers, for the Governor has come from Caesarea as usual and taken up his quarters in the Praetorium. And in the fortress of Antonia, overlooking the Temple Courts, is a strong garrison of troops ready to swoop down upon the people at the least sign of disturbance the Pasch is wont to be a troublesome time. There go some courtly Herodians and wealthy Sadducees and despised publicans. Over there, above the heads of the crowd, appear the high turbans of rabbis. Priests, traders, Gentile strangers, slaves—through what a motley throng the two Apostles made their way!

They have come to a house on Mount Sion in the south-western quarter of the City. Here their guide stops, and they go in and give their message. The owner's face brightens at the first words: "The Master saith," and whilst Peter goes off to buy the lamb, he helps John to make everything ready in the upper chamber which he puts at our Lord's disposal. The Apostles wonder why he is so willing—he is a secret disciple, perhaps. Peter buys the victim, a lamb without blemish of a year old, and takes it to the Temple, where it is killed. In preparing it for cooking the greatest care must be taken that no bone shall be broken. This lamb is a type of Him of whom the prophet had said:

"They shall not break a bone of Him." Before being roasted it is fastened to two pieces of wood, the front feet being stretched out in the form of a cross. When Peter returns he finds all ready—on the tables the thin cakes of unleavened bread, the bitter herbs, the wine mixed with water, and a red sauce called charoseth. Round the low tables, forming a semi-circle, John had so arranged the couches that he would be on one side of his Master and Judas on the other, at one end of the tables, Peter opposite at the other end, the rest in pairs around, as he knew they would like. Pitchers of water and basins for washing hands were about the room, and the whole was lit up by festive lamps.

As evening drew on Jesus came with the other Apostles. When they had taken their places He said to them:

"With desire I have desired to eat this Pasch with you before I suffer." Then John, as the youngest present, asked the meaning of this night's solemn service, and our Lord told the story of the deliverance from Egypt, of the sprinkling of the blood of the Paschal Lamb, of the Manna in the desert, and of the lifting up of the Brazen Serpent, by which their fathers of old were saved from death. As He looked upon the lamb stretched crosswise before Him, He thought of the morrow, when, after fifteen hundred years of types, the fulfilment would come, and the Lamb of God by His Death would take away the sins of the world.

During the Paschal Supper Jesus rose from the table, laid aside His upper garment, and, having taken a towel, girded Himself. Then, pouring water into a basin, He came and knelt before Peter to wash his feet. Peter, all amazement, drew them up, exclaiming:

"Lord, dost Thou wash my feet ?" Jesus said to him: "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." Peter said to Him:

"Thou shalt never wash my feet." Jesus answered him:

"If I wash thee not thou shalt have no part with Me." Peter said to Him: "Lord, not only my feet but also my hands and my head." Jesus said to him:

"He that is washed needeth not but to wash his feet, but is clean wholly. And you are clean, but not all." Then after He had washed their feet and taken His garments, being sat down again, He said to them:

"Know you what I have done to you ? You call Me Master and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. If then I, being your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example that as I have done to you, so you do also." Then He said to them sorrowfully:

"Amen, amen, I say to you, one of you shall betray Me."

The disciples in consternation looked upon one another, "doubting of whom He spoke" says St. John. And being very much troubled they began to say to Him one by one:

"Is it I, Lord?" And He answering said: "One of the Twelve whose hand is with Me on the table, he shall betray Me. The Son of Man indeed goeth as it is written of Him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man shall be betrayed; it were better for him if that man had not been born."

Terrified at these awful words, the disciples were silent. But presently Judas, afraid of being noticed if he did not ask with the rest, said:

"Is it I, Rabbi?" Jesus answered him in a whisper: "Thou hast said it."

How careful our Lord must have been of the good name of Judas, that not one of his fellow-disciples thought of suspecting him. Even now the miserable man was not afraid of his Master betraying him, or he would never have dared to put that question. What would have happened if Peter or the sons of Zebedee had heard those words: "Thou hast said it?"

The Heart of Jesus was wrung with anguish at the thought of the misery to which one of His chosen Twelve was rushing. Again and again during the supper He speaks of the betrayal, now in tender, now in terrible words, striving by fear when love had failed to save him before it is too late. But now for a brief space the

heavy cloud that overshadowed

them all seemed lifted. For, as they looked upon the Master, they saw His countenance glow with a love and fervour so intense as to appear transfigured.

He had cleared a little space in front of Him and taken into His holy and venerable hands one of the loaves of unleavened bread. And, whilst they looked on in wonder, He lifted up His eyes to Heaven, and, giving thanks, blessed, and broke, and gave to them, saying:

"Take ye and eat, this is My Body which is given for you. Do this for a commemoration of Me." And they received from His hand what He gave His true Body under the appearance of bread. Here, then, was the meaning of those mysterious words at Capharnaum:

"The bread that I will give is My flesh for the life of the world." They did not understand even now, but He had the words of eternal life; they believed, and adored.

During the Paschal supper three cups of wine mixed with water were passed round from one guest to another. Standing before Jesus was the third cup, "the chalice of benediction," which had to be taken before the last hymns were sung. Jesus took it into His hands, and, giving thanks, blessed it and passed it to them, saying:

"Drink ye all of this. For this is My Blood of the New Testament which shall be shed for many unto the remission of sins." And again they received what He gave them—His true Blood under the appearance of wine. They received not more than before, not more than we receive in Holy Communion, but under another appearance. And because it was Himself whole and entire, together with His Body and Blood were His Soul and Divinity, all

that He has and is. Truly might the Beloved Disciple say of Jesus, instituting this Sacrament of Love, that "having loved His own, who were in the world. He loved them unto the end." Love, even such as His, can go no further. It is because it has gone so far that men refuse to believe.

The first Mass had been said; the first Consecration wrought; the first Communicants fed in the greatest of the Sacraments with the true Bread from Heaven; the first priests ordained. For Christ, as David had foretold, was to be a Priest, not once only, on Calvary, but "for ever," a Priest like Melchisedech, whose offering was bread and wine. The New Sacrifice was to be the Sacrifice of the Gentiles, as the prophet Malachy had foretold, offered in every land, at every hour, from the rising to the setting of the sun, not lessening but magnifying the first and bloody Sacrifice from which its virtue flows. Where but in the Sacrifice of the Mass shall we find these prophecies fulfilled? To carry on His office when He was gone, the great High- Priest had to ordain other priests, and this He did in these words:

"Do this in commemoration of Me." With bowed heads the first Communicants made their thanksgiving. When they looked again into their Master's face, the glow of exultation with which He had made us the greatest of His gifts had passed away, and once more there had settled on His brow the anguish of a friend betrayed. Peter could bear the dreadful suspense no longer. Being directly opposite to John, he beckoned to him and said:

"Who is it of whom He speaketh?" John, leaning back on his couch, was resting his head on his Master's breast. He looked up into His face and said:

"Lord, who is it?" Jesus answered: "He it is to whom I shall reach bread dipped." And when He had moistened the bread, He gave it to Judas Iscariot. Then, seeing every warning lost on the traitor, He said to him:

"What thou doest do quickly." No one at the table, St. John tells us, knew why this was said. They thought our Lord had sent Judas to buy something, or to give an alms to the poor. Judas at once rose and went out. And it was night. The white light of the Paschal moon shone into the room and fell full on the Master's face. It was pale and troubled. And its trouble was reflected on all the faces round. The disciples were so accustomed to lean on Him, to cast all their care on Him, that they could only see with blank dismay the cloud upon that brow hitherto serene in every storm. A dim apprehension of coming sorrow, of parting from Him who was all in all to them, weighed heavily on them, and they looked at Him helplessly for comfort. He did not disappoint them. Never before had His words been so tender:

"Little children," He said, looking round upon them, "yet a little while I am with you. You shall seek Me, but whither I go you cannot come." Peter said to Him:

"Lord, whither goest Thou?" Jesus answered: "Whither I go thou canst not follow Me now, but thou shalt follow hereafter." Peter said to Him:

"Why cannot I follow Thee now? I will lay down my life for Thee." Jesus answered him:

"Wilt thou lay down thy life for Me? Amen, amen, I say to thee, the cock shall not crow till thou deny Me thrice." Peter deny his Master! The disciples were astonished. Of all the surprises to-night this was the greatest. But, if Peter is to fall away, some one else must be first. Who will it be? And at once they begin the old dispute—which of them is the greatest. But Peter, in spite of his fall, was not to lose the place to which his Master had raised him. Our Lord went on:

"Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not, and thou being once converted confirm thy brethren." Peter said to Him:

"Lord, I am ready to go with Thee both to prison and to death." And He said: "

I say to thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day till thou thrice deniest that thou knowest Me."

Every act, every word of our Blessed Lord's at the Last Supper speaks of love. He is taking leave of His dearly beloved disciples. He is giving them His farewell instructions. And now He gives them that Commandment which, because it is so dear to His Heart, He calls His own. A new commandment I give you that you love one another. This is My commandment that you love one another as I have loved you. By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love one for another. Let not your heart be troubled. I go to prepare a

place for you. And I will come again and will take you to Myself, that where I am you also may be. And I will ask the Father to give you another Comforter. Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you. You now indeed have sorrow, but I will see you again and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man shall take from you."

Then, lifting up His eyes to Heaven, He prayed for them to His Father that they might be kept safe amid the dangers of the world, and that where He was going they too might come and be with Him. After this they said a hymn and went out. It was late, but the moon was flooding the City with light. The Temple roof was one sheet of silver. They crossed the brook Cedron, and began to go up the Mount of Olives. And Jesus said to them:

"You will all be scandalized in Me this night, for it is written: "I will strike the shepherd and the sheep shall be scattered. But after I shall be risen again, I will go before you into Galilee." Peter said to Him:

"Although all shall be scandalized in Thee, yet not I." Jesus said to him: "Amen, amen, I say to thee, today, even in this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny Me thrice." But he spoke the more vehemently:

"Although I should die together with Thee, I will not deny Thee." And in like manner also said they all."

A few paces above the brook was a garden called Gethsemane. It was a quiet place, and our Lord often went there to pray; sometimes He spent the whole night in prayer beneath the olive trees. On this night He left eight of the Apostles at the gate, and took inside only Peter, James and John.

"My soul is sorrowful even unto death," He said to these three, and He begged them like good and faithful friends not to leave Him alone in His trouble, but to watch and pray with Him. Bright moonlight lit up the Garden, but beneath the trees all was dark and gloomy. Our Lord went forward alone and knelt down. Presently He fell on His face and prayed in an agony of terror that He might be spared the awful sufferings that were at hand.

"Abba, Father," He said, " all things are possible to Thee; remove this chalice from Me; but not what I will, but what Thou wilt." He had offered Himself to take away the sins of the world, and now they all came distinctly before Him, every sin and every sinner. And He was to be punished as if He had done all those wicked things. He saw the punishment—the spitting, the scourging, the nailing to the cross, the hanging there for three long hours. He saw, too, that all He was going to suffer would be of no use to many souls that He loved. The pain of all this was so dreadful that He went to His three disciples to get a little comfort from them. But they were asleep! Gently waking them, He said to Peter:

"What ! Could you not watch one hour with Me? Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation." Again He went and prayed saying the same words! His trouble of mind became so awful that it was like the agony of a dying man. He was bathed in a sweat of blood, which, after soaking His garments, trickled down upon the ground. Then an Angel came from Heaven to comfort Him by showing Him the good that from His bitter pains would come to us. And He said:

"My Father, if this chalice cannot pass away unless I drink it, Thy Will be done." He did not give up prayer on this dreadful night, but taught us by His example to pray more earnestly when we are in trouble; for "being in an agony He prayed the longer."

About midnight lights appeared behind the trees, and our Lord went to rouse His disciples, who had fallen asleep again. "Rise" He said, "behold, he that will betray Me is at hand." A band of soldiers and servants from the chief priests, with lanterns, torches and weapons, were coming stealthily into the Garden, led by a man who looked about here and there as if in search of someone. He had given the party a sign, saying:

"Whomsoever I shall kiss, that is He; lay hold on Him and lead Him away carefully." And, going up to Jesus, he said:

"Hail, Rabbi !" and kissed Him. Jesus said to him:

"Friend, whereto art thou come? Judas, dost thou betray the Son of Man with a kiss?" It was the last warning—a tender word, and a solemn one—and both thrown away. Then, knowing all things that were to come upon Him, He went forward and said to the soldiers:

"Whom seek ye?" They answered: "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus answered:

"I am He." As soon as He had said this they went backward Judas, the soldiers, the priests—and fell on their faces before Him. He let them rise, and asked again:

"Whom seek ye?" They answered:

"Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus answered: "I have told you that I am He; if, therefore, you seek Me, let these go their way." He pointed to His disciples, and forbade the soldiers to touch them. Then His enemies came up and bound Him fast.

"Lord, shall we strike with the sword?" cried Peter. And without waiting for an answer, he drew a sword he had with him, and striking one of the servants of the High-Priest, cut off his right ear. But Jesus said:

"Put up thy sword into its place. The chalice which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?" And bending forward, He touched the servant's ear and healed him.

Then the disciples all leaving Him fled away. But Peter and John, ashamed of their cowardice, soon returned and followed their Master as He was led to the palace of the High-priest. This was Caiaphas, though many of the Jews who would not acknowledge a man appointed by the Romans regarded Annas, his father-in-law, as the High-priest. The palaces of the two were separated by a courtyard only. All was astir there when the soldiers arrived with the Prisoner. Annas, a cruel and wicked old man, the chief contriver of the plots against our Lord, had sent for Him that he might enjoy the sight of his enemy now helpless and humbled; and at the

house of Caiaphas the members of the Sanhedrin were arriving for the trial that was to be held there immediately.

Annas questioned our Blessed Lord about His doctrines and His disciples, in the hope of getting Him to say something that could be turned against Him. Our Lord who saw into his heart bade him ask those who had heard His teaching. On this, a servant of Annas, thinking to please his Master, struck Jesus a heavy blow on the face, saying:

"Answerest Thou the High-priest so?" Jesus said gently: "If I have spoken evil, give testimony of the evil, but if well, why strikest thou Me?"

The Sanhedrists were now assembled at the house of Caiaphas, and seated in a semi-circle on cushions, Caiaphas, as president, on a platform. Our Lord was brought in by His guards and placed standing before His judges for trial. It was a strange trial, for the death of the Prisoner was already decreed, and all that was wanted was some evidence against Him to give an appearance of justice to the sentence. But His life had been so holy that there was no hope of finding anything amiss in it; false witnesses were therefore brought in, but their testimony did not agree. Jesus heard all and was silent. The prophet Isaias had said of Him:

"He shall be dumb as a lamb before His shearer, and He shall not open His mouth." At length Caiaphas, flushed with anger, rose up and exclaimed:

"Answerest Thou nothing to the things that are laid to Thy charge by these men?" But He answered nothing. What was to be done? How could He be made to speak? The crafty president sees a way. He will put a question to which the Accused will be bound to answer, and on that answer He can be condemned. See them standing there face to face—the Highpriest in his robes of office, the Son of God with His hands bound behind His back.

"I adjure Thee by the Living God," said Caiaphas, "that Thou tell us if Thou be the Christ, the Son of God." Jesus said to him: "Thou hast said it. And, hereafter, you shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of the power of God and coming in the clouds of Heaven." This was all they wanted. Transported, as it were, with holy indignation, the High-priest seized His garment and tore it from the neck down.

"He hath blasphemed!" he cried; "behold, you have heard the blasphemy; what think you?" And they answering said: "He is guilty of death."

A disgraceful scene of insult and cruelty followed, in which the priests themselves seem to have set the example. "The men that held Him mocked Him and struck Him. And they did spit on His face and buffeted Him. And they blindfolded Him and smote His face with the palms of their hands, saying:

"Prophesy unto us, O Christ! who is he that struck Thee?" While all this was going on before Annas and Caiaphas, another scene was taking place in the courtyard below where the servants were waiting to hear the result of the trial. The night was cold and they had made a fire and were standing round it warming

themselves. Peter, who had come into the court, was warming himself with the rest. The light was full upon his face, and the portress, who had let him in, after looking at him attentively, said:

"Thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth." Peter was frightened and denied before them all:

"Woman, I know Him not." And the cock crew. A little later another maid saw him and said to the standers by:

"This man was with Jesus of Nazareth." Again he denied and with an oath:

"I know not the Man." An oath this time, and his Master is "the Man." About an hour after, when it had got about among the servants that one of the disciples of the Galilean had dared to come in amongst them, they came about Peter and said:

"Surely thou art one of them, for even thy speech doth betray thee." Even the commoner sort in Jerusalem made fun of the pronunciation and talk of the north country folk, and Peter had only to open his mouth to prove that he was unmistakably from Galilee. Poor Peter, he had been getting more and more frightened. Thoroughly terrified now, he began to curse and to swear, saying:

"I know not this Man of whom you speak." The cock crew again, and at the same moment our Lord passed through the court. He was suffering cruelly from the hands of His tormentors, but more cruelly from the lips of His chosen disciple who had denied Him. Yet there was no indignation in His Heart. Rather was It full of pity for one who after all had followed Him into danger out of love. And the Lord turning looked on Peter. And Peter remembered the word that Jesus had said unto him:

"Before the cock crow twice thou shalt thrice deny Me." And, going forth, he wept bitterly.