

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Who was the young man mentioned by Mark (xiv, 51) and how did he come to be there?

Saint Mark himself is usually believed to have been the youth. It is most natural to accept the passage as a personal experience; for it is not important enough for a special revelation, nor can we ascribe it to Saint Peter, who at the time would scarcely have noticed the incident. From what we know of the second Evangelist we conclude that at the time of the Passion of our Lord he was still a youth, not old enough to be one of our Lord's disciples.

We come across his name after the deliverance of Saint Peter from prison, when the Apostle found the praying Christians in his mother's house (Acts xii, 12) which by that time had become the recognized centre of the first faithful. Mary is supposed to have been one of the holy women. According to an immemorial tradition, not contradicted by any other, her house was also the place of the Last Supper, the domicile of the faithful between the Ascension and Pentecost and the scene of the Descent of the Holy Ghost (Acts i, 14).

We know that our Lord could have chosen another Divan for the celebration of the Holy Eucharist (Mt. xxvi, 17; Mk. xiv, 12; Lk. xxii, 14). But we now see his wisdom in selecting a room which could hold one hundred and twenty people, and offered outside a standing place for more than 3,000 persons. (Acts ii, 41).

From all we learn of the first Christian Easter morning we see that there must have been in Jerusalem a common meeting place to which the dispersed Apostles turned after their fright, but not without fear. In that house Mary Magdalen found St. Peter (John xx, 2), the other holy women the rest of the Apostles (Mt. xxviii, 8; Mk. xvi, 10), and from it the two disciples took their leave before departing for Emmaus (Lk. xxiv, 22). All becomes plain sailing if we accept the view that this centre was the house of the Cenacle, the property of Mark's father who is mentioned as the "Master" (Mk. xiv, 14): We are also justified in assuming that his wife Mary, was the hostess of our Blessed Lady and the other holy women from Galilee who had come for the feast, although women were not bound to attend it (Lk. xxiii, 55; xxiv, 1, 2, 10).

Now we come to the crucial question as to *why* Saint Mark was that night at Gethsemani. The suggestion that he followed the holy Company from the Supper Room raises more questions than it answers. As the Divan was quite separated from the other domestic apartments, how did he know when the guests were leaving? Did he walk a whole mile through the crowded streets in his scanty night attire? Where was he during the long drawn-out agony on that cold night?

If we read the text of the Evangelist without prejudice it describes the behaviour of a youth just roused from sleep by the noise of the

capture, and in his youthful curiosity rushing out to see without taking the trouble of dressing. One may justly ask : Why did he sleep there ? And surely the answer is : Since the ordinary living rooms of his home were crowded with visitors, he was sent out to sleep in the farm buildings of Gethsemani, because the garden was his father's property.

This natural explanation is strengthened by considering first the strict duty of Eastern hospitality towards our Lord. The host of the evening was bound in honour to provide shelter for his guests. As the town house was full of women he offered our Lord shelter in Gethsemani. The sheds about the oil press were not magnificent ; but our Lord's companions were accustomed to such sleeping accommodation ; they had probably spent the night there often before and they found them more comfortable than the tents of the numerous pilgrims who were encamped around Jerusalem (as do the Mohammedans to this day, before the Nebi Musa celebrations).

The offer was accepted by our Lord who carefully observed the Eastern custom of not changing the host, which He had enjoined on his disciples (Lk. x, 7).

Judas knew these facts, and acted upon them. Our Lord, not wanting Judas to interrupt the Pasch, nor his parting instructions, nor his agony, kept the place of the Last Supper a secret from the traitor, by sending the two Apostles with cryptic instructions. But as soon as Judas had arrived at the Cenacle he knew for certain where he could find the Master that night.

Putting together the different details, i.e., the behaviour of the young Mark, the duty of the host, the politeness of our Lord, and the conviction of Judas, we find four good reasons for upholding the view that Gethsemani was the property of Mark's family. This fact coupled with the presence of guests in his father's house probably explains his being in the garden at that late hour.

LAMBERT NOLLE, O.S.B.

What was the difference between the drink offered to our Lord before His crucifixion (Mt. xxvii, 34 ; Mk. xv, 23) and that offered to Him just before His death (Mt. xxvii, 48 ; Mk. xv, 36 ; Jn. xix, 29) ?

There appears at first sight to be a discrepancy between Mt. and Mk. about the first drink offered. Mt. says it was wine mixed with gall, but Mk. describes it as wine mixed with myrrh. There can hardly be a doubt that they are referring to the same drink ; how are they to be reconciled ? Since myrrh is bitter, many older commentators used to say that the word "gall" was employed by Mt. to describe anything bitter and so could indicate myrrh. Others held that both myrrh and gall were put in the wine. At all events these older authors held that the drink was bitter, that it was given to our Lord to increase His sufferings and that He, knowing it was given out of mockery, refused to drink. The Gospels