the gates to let in a nation that is just, one that keeps faith. A nation of firm purpose you keep in peace; in peace for it trusts in you.' Trust in the Lord forever! For the Lord is an eternal Rock" (see Is. 25 & 26)

When the "Day of the Lord" comes there is certainly going to be need of a Rock to hold on to; and from the understanding of what the "Day of the Lord" means, it can truly be said that today, more than ever before in world history, humanity has perhaps the most vivid clues possible of that approaching event. All the signs that our Lord and Saints Peter and Paul indicated would signal the Lord's Return appear to be coming together very quickly and very clearly. Never before could the words of the Second Epistle of Peter apply as they can in this nuclear age: "But the Lord's Day will come — as a thief — in which the heavens will pass away with a shrieking noise and the earth, all her works, will be laid bare. Since, therefore, all these things are to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in holy behavior and godliness, as you anticipate and hurry the coming of God's Day, because of which the heavens catching fire will be dissolved and the elements burning intensely will melt?" (2 P. 3:10-12). There is a hint here that terror is in store only for the unrepentant unholy and the godless. For the faithful, the "Lord's Day" presents itself in a totally different manner.

Those who wholeheartedly claim Jesus as their Lord, and are baptized into His Body, know Jesus as their Great High Priest who made His entrance *once* from the Cross through His torn flesh to the true Holy of Holies in heaven with His own filial obedience and sacrificial blood. That was His first great-high-priestly act on their behalf. It was the inauguration of their redemption at the close of the earthly stage of His priesthood. Presently Jesus is enthroned at the Father's right hand, *forever* in living intercession for them. That is His second great-high-priestly act on their behalf. It is the time of the 'working out' of their redemption during the heavenly stage of His priesthood. We are assured of a final stage of Christ's great high priesthood by the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, for he says: "Just as it is appointed for people to die only once, and after that they face judgment, so too Christ, Who was offered only once to bear the sins of the many [all peoples], will appear *a second time*, not to deal with sin again, but *to give* [*the fullness of*] *salvation to those who are eagerly waiting for Him* (9:27,28). Christ's Return In Glory (at which time He will gather together His Mystical Body and present it — the New Jerusalem, His Bride — to the Father, so that God be All in all) will be, therefore, the third and final great-high-priestly act on the believers' behalf. It will be the eschatological (final, last) stage of His priesthood.

These three stages of Christ's eternal great high priesthood are put together in the well-known sentence from the Epistle to the Hebrews: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and unto the ages [the new dimension that is 'eternal life' — the Kingdom of God fulfilled]" (13:8).

What is quite significant about the statement in Hebrews 9:27,28 about Christ's return is the fact that the author did not consider — in the application of the comparison of the fate of human beings — the whole negative side of the "judgment" he mentioned. For he says nothing about the rejected, of those condemned at this judgment, even though the very idea of a threatening final judgment is well known to him and he knowingly speaks about it — for example in 10:27, where there is talk about "a fearful anticipation of judgment and the fury of fire that is going to consume God's adversaries..."

So then, from the point of view of his doctrine on Christ as priest, the Lord's *return* occupies the author only from its positive side, because he attributes such great power to the atonement of Christ the high priest. His approach to the Lord's "Coming Again" is far from the terrifying atmosphere of the "Day of Wrath" hymn, and in perfect harmony with the nostalgic looking out for it on the part of the fervent early Church, which during its eucharistic liturgy cried out: "Maran atha" [Our Lord, come!]. This was also, in fact, the approach of the presently ending Jubilee Year of the Redemption with its solemn invitation to a vibrant Christian life steeped in the paschal sacraments and prayer.

The Lord's Glorious Return, then, is not something that Christ's faithful should dread or attempt to put off at all cost. For thousands of years Israel closed the ritual of the passover meal with the singing of Psalm 118. This fact gave that Psalm a special liturgical emphasis and made its singing the high point, not only of the collection of the Psalms sung after the meal (together called the Hallel), but also of the whole passover ritual. The arrangement of the verses of Psalm 118 indicate two alternately singing groups of people; the one group is to accompany the Messiah as his community on the day he comes; the other is to greet him as he enters the Holy City. Scholars claim that the way this Psalm is arranged and sung as an anticipation, shows that, at the time of Jesus, the Passover was in no way celebrated only as a meal bringing to mind the people's liberation from Egypt, but at the same time, and primarily, as a representation of the hour of redemption. Jesus and His disciples also ended the passover meal with the second part of the Hallel ("when they had sung a hymn") in accordance with the ritual. The end of Psalm 118 forms the last prayer that Jesus prayed before He began His journey to the Garden of Olives where His Passion began. When we realize that Jesus ended the last meal with his disciples by *anticipating the jubilation of the alternately singing choirs which would greet Him at His Return*, we can understand the deepest meaning of that hour, and with it of the Lord's Supper — the Eucharist: It is a gift that *makes present* as real, *before the actual time*, what the Lord's Return will bring to perfection, and it is the guarantee of that Return.

In the light of this realization the weight of the passage from 2 Peter (3:11,12) becomes all the more clear: "Since, therefore, all these things are to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in holy behavior and godliness, as you *anticipate and hurry* the coming of God's Day?". A passage from Hebrews too can be seen as carrying this special sense: "Let us be concerned for each other, to stir a response in love and good works. Do not stay away from the meetings of the community as some do, but encourage each other to go; and more so as you see the Day drawing near" (10:24,25). The insistence on frequenting the Sacraments and on praying daily, especially in community, to the point of making a habit of these (to which the observance of the Holy Year Jubilee was geared to lend itself) is in harmony with the conviction that the early Christians had as to the ultimate purpose of the Eucharist. By coming together daily for table fellowship (communion) in the short period of time before the Lord's Return in answer to Christ's command: "Do this in remembrance of me," and in this way acknowledging Jesus as their Lord before the world, the faithful represent the initiated salvation work before God, and they daily implore Him to remember the Messiah and bring about the completion of His work by His Return in Glory. And not only "bring about" but "hurry it up!" The meaning seen by scholars in St. Paul's words: "Until he comes" in 1 Cor. 11:26 (Every time, then, you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes) is: As often as the death of the Lord is proclaimed at the Lord's Supper, and the *Maranatha* [Our Lord, come!] rises upwards, God is reminded of the unfulfilled climax of the work of salvation 'until [the goal is reached, that] he [the Messiah] comes.'

The rehearsal for the Lord's Return took place even before the Last Supper — on Palm Sunday. Jesus was concerned very much with the Messianic interpretation of Psalm 118. He himself showed his listeners how the verses concerning the rejected building stone which God makes the keystone are a prophecy of His own death and exaltation (Mk. 8:31; 12:10; Lk. 17:25). He knew that this psalm revealed how God would guide his Messiah through suffering to glory, through

The eastern gate of the Temple Area (the Golden Gate) also known as the Gate of Mercy in the wall of the 'old city' of Jerusalem.

chastisement to the opened door of salvation, and at the same time the ceaseless praise of God at the time of the consummation. That is why He could tell the people of Jerusalem exactly what would happen: "For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed be in the name of the Lord he who comes.'"

Once Jesus' body was buried, no one but believers saw Him alive again; but Jesus' word assures us that the inhabitants of Jerusalem will see Him and greet Him as the Scriptures say they will.

I was in Jerusalem on the day Israel gave up the rest of the Sinai peninsula to Egypt. On the television screen that day I witnessed a reporter, standing against the background of the eastern wall of the temple area and its only gate, saying that behind him was what the Jewish people call the "Gate of Mercy" for they believe that when Messiah comes he will triumphantly enter the city *through it* as Israel's merciful redeemer. [The reader may look into Psalm 116 — a part of the Hallel — with regard to the sacrifices of thanksgiving and the payment of vows in the presence of the people promised to the merciful redeemer who has delivered the living from death.] The reporter continued saying that the Messiah will have to perform two miracles to enter Jerusalem: one, to get *to* the gate, because on the terrain before it is an Islamic cemetery densely covered with tombs; it would cause a major uproar were the Israelis to open a road over that terrain to the gate. The other miracle — to get *through* the gate, because it is totally sealed up with stonework.

What I witnessed is very significant to me because it is in fact a current topic of conversation, and is not considered to be empty nonsense among believing members of the Jewish nation. In fact, when I mentioned to our guide that I noticed there were far more tombs on the slope of the Mount of Olives just opposite that wall and gate than were found there fifteen years ago, he told me (as though it were nothing special to relate) it was because Jews from around the world arrange to be buried there, wanting to be there when the Messiah comes!

It was when I reread Ezechiel's Prophecy later (Ch.47) that the significance of that gate through which the Messiah is to take possession of the Holy City and the symbolism of the Holy Year Doors compelled my attention.

When Ezechiel speaks of the facade of the temple (just before that gate) as facing eastward, he is offering us a symbol of Jesus ("destroy this temple . . ."), who, by facing the direction from which Divinity was often known to manifest Itself, is in the posture of obedience — essentially, a son's respectful relationship towards a loving Father rather than a slave's duty towards a master.

What was the result of Christ's obedience?

Ezechiel saw water trickle from beneath the threshold of the temple toward the east (in the direction of the Gate of Mercy). He notes that the water flowed from the southern side of the temple, south of the altar. The altar is certainly the symbol of the Cross on which Christ voluntarily laid down His life. The threshold, or entrance to the temple can be seen to be our Lord's Sacred Heart: "Through His merciful Heart as through an open gate we pass through to heaven," wrote Sister Faustina as she concluded one of her prayers in which she asked "that we may with confidence, as your children, await your final coming — that day known to You alone" (Diary V, 143). "From beneath the threshold" perfectly corresponds to the lance wound in Christ's right side from which gushed forth Blood and Water — the separation of serum and blood that connotes death already having taken place; with Jesus facing east, the wound would be on the "southern side of the temple."

Led outside by the north gate around to the outer gate facing the east, Ezechiel saw there water trickling from the southern side; another very revealing note, for the eastern gate has two archways, the northern of which is known by Jews and Arabs as the Gate of Mercy, and the southern — the Gate of Repentance! The water trickling through the latter flows "into the eastern district down upon the Arabah, and empties into the sea, the salt waters, which it makes fresh." Arabah denotes a desert. The direction of the now swollen river, that can be crossed only by swimming, is toward the Dead Sea; but it can also allude to the area east of the Garden of Eden, from which side the Cherubs guarded the entrance to Paradise, and so the direction of the cursed land that Adam had to till by the sweat of his brow.

The River of Water is, no doubt, the Holy Spirit "delivered over," as St. John sees it, to the Church in the persons of Mary and John at the foot of the Cross. The Water brings life to whatever it touches. Along its banks are many trees of every kind, bearing fresh fruit every month and having unfading leaves that serve for medicine. The Book of Revelation reveals the same picture but towards its end there are found recorded

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