

EGERIA:
DIARY OF A PILGRIMAGE

TRANSLATED AND ANNOTATED

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CHAPTER 30

The following day, Sunday, marks the beginning of Holy Week,³⁵¹ which they call here the Great Week.³⁵² On this Sunday morning, at the completion of those rites which are customarily celebrated at the Anastasis or the Cross from the first cockcrow until dawn, everyone assembles for the liturgy according to custom in the major church, called the Martyrium. It is called the Martyrium because it is on Golgotha, behind the Cross, where the Lord suffered His Passion, and is therefore a shrine of martyrdom.³⁵³ As soon as everything has been celebrated in the major church as usual, but before the dismissal is given, the archdeacon raises his voice and first says: "Throughout this whole week, beginning tomorrow at

the ninth hour, let us all gather in the Martyrium, in the major church." Then he raises his voice a second time, saying: "Today let us all be ready to assemble at the seventh hour at the Eleona." When the dismissal has been given in the Martyrium or major church, the bishop is led to the accompaniment of hymns to the Anastasis, and there all ceremonies are accomplished which customarily take place every Sunday at the Anastasis following the dismissal from the Martyrium. Then everyone retires to his home to eat hastily, so that at the beginning of the seventh hour everyone will be ready to assemble in the church on the Eleona, by which I mean the Mount of Olives, where the grotto in which the Lord taught is located.³⁵⁴

CHAPTER 31

At the seventh hour all the people go up to the church on the Mount of Olives, that is, to the Eleona. The bishop sits down, hymns and antiphons appropriate to the day and place are sung, and there are likewise readings from the Scriptures.³⁵⁵ As the ninth hour approaches, they move up, chanting hymns, to the Imbomon, that is, to the place from which the Lord ascended into heaven;³⁵⁶ and everyone sits down there. When the bishop is present, the people are always commanded to be seated, so that only the deacons remain standing. And there hymns and antiphons proper to the day and place are sung, interspersed with appropriate readings from the Scriptures and prayers.

As the eleventh hour draws near, that particular passage from Scripture is read in which the children bearing

palms and branches came forth to meet the Lord, saying: *Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.*³⁵⁷ The bishop and all the people rise immediately, and then everyone walks down from the top of the Mount of Olives, with the people preceding the bishop and responding continually with *Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord* to the hymns and antiphons. All the children who are present here, including those who are not yet able to walk because they are too young and therefore are carried on their parents' shoulders,³⁵⁸ all of them bear branches, some carrying palms, others, olive branches. And the bishop is led in the same manner as the Lord once was led.³⁵⁹ From the top of the mountain as far as the city, and from there through the entire city as far as the Anastasis, everyone accompanies the bishop the whole way on foot, and this includes distinguished ladies and men of consequence,³⁶⁰ reciting the responses all the while; and they move very slowly so that the people will not tire. By the time they arrive at the Anastasis, it is already evening. Once they have arrived there, even though it is evening, vespers is celebrated; then a prayer is said at the Cross and the people are dismissed.

CHAPTER 32

On Monday, the following day, they carry out in the Anastasis whatever ceremonies are customarily performed from the first cockcrow until dawn, as well as whatever is done at the third and sixth hours throughout Lent. However, at the ninth hour everyone comes together in the major church or Martyrium, and until the first hour of

the night they continually sing hymns and antiphons, and read passages from the Scriptures fitting to the day and the place, always interrupting them with prayers.³⁶¹ Vespers is celebrated in the Martyrium, when the hour for it is at hand. The result is that it is already night when the dismissal is given at the Martyrium.³⁶² As soon as the dismissal has been given, the bishop is led from there to the Anastasis to the accompaniment of hymns. When he has entered the Anastasis, a hymn is sung, a prayer is said, first the catechumens and then the faithful are blessed, and finally the dismissal is given.

CHAPTER 33

On Tuesday they do everything in the same way as on Monday. Only this is added on Tuesday: late at night, after the dismissal has been given in the Martyrium and they have gone to the Anastasis, and a second dismissal has been given at the Anastasis, they all go at that hour in the night to the church which is located on Mount Eleona.³⁶³ As soon as they have arrived in this church, the bishop goes into the grotto where the Lord used to teach His disciples.³⁶⁴ There the bishop takes up the book of the Gospels and, while standing, reads the words of the Lord which are written in the Gospel according to Matthew at the place where He said: *Take heed that no man seduce you.*³⁶⁵ Then the bishop reads the Lord's entire discourse. When he has finished reading it, he says a prayer and blesses the catechumens and then the faithful. The dismissal is given, and they return from the mountain, and everyone goes to his own home, for it is now very late at night.

CHAPTER 34

On Wednesday everything is done throughout the day from the first cockcrow just as on Monday and Tuesday. However, following the dismissal at night at the Martyrium, the bishop is led to the accompaniment of hymns to the Anastasis. He goes immediately into the grotto within the Anastasis, and he stands within the railings. A priest, however, standing in front of the railings, takes up the Gospel and reads that passage where Judas Iscariot went to the Jews to set the price they would pay him to betray the Lord.³⁶⁶ While this passage is being read, there is such moaning and groaning from among the people that no one can help being moved to tears in that moment. Afterwards, a prayer is said, first the catechumens and then the faithful are blessed, and finally the dismissal is given.

CHAPTER 35

On Thursday whatever is customarily done from the first cockcrow until morning and what is done at the third and sixth hours takes place at the Anastasis. At the eighth hour all the people gather as usual at the Martyrium,³⁶⁷ earlier, however, than on other days, because the dismissal must be given more quickly. When all the people have assembled, the prescribed rites are celebrated. On that day the sacrifice is offered at the Martyrium, and the dismissal from there is given around the tenth hour. Before the dismissal is given, however, the archdeacon raises his voice, saying: "At the first hour of the night let us assemble at the church which is on the Eleona, for much

toil lies ahead of us on this day's night." Following the dismissal from the Martyrium, everyone proceeds behind the Cross, where, after a hymn is sung and a prayer is said, the bishop offers the sacrifice and everyone receives Communion. Except on this one day, throughout the year the sacrifice is never offered behind the Cross save on this day alone.³⁶⁸ The dismissal is given there, and everyone goes to the Anastasis, where a prayer is said, the catechumens as well as the faithful are blessed, as is customary, and the dismissal is given.³⁶⁹

Everyone then hurries home to eat, because, immediately after having eaten, everyone goes to the Eleona, to the church where the grotto in which the Lord gathered with His disciples on that day is located. And there, until around the fifth hour of the night, they continually sing hymns and antiphons and read the scriptural passages proper to the place and to the day. Between these, prayers are said. Moreover, they read those passages from the Gospels in which the Lord spoke to His disciples on that day while sitting in the same grotto which lies within this church.³⁷⁰ And from here, around the sixth hour of the night, everyone goes up to the Imbomon, singing hymns. That is the place from which the Lord ascended into heaven. There also they sing hymns and antiphons and read scriptural passages proper to the day; and whatever prayers are said, whatever prayers the bishop recites, they will always be proper to the day and to the place.

CHAPTER 36

As soon as it begins to be the hour of cockcrow, everyone comes down from the Imbomon singing hymns and pro-

ceeds toward the very place where the Lord prayed, as it is written in the Gospel: *And He went as far as a stone's throw and He prayed*, and so forth.³⁷¹ On that spot stands a tasteful church.³⁷² The bishop and all the people enter there, where a prayer fitting to the day and the place is said, followed by an appropriate hymn, and a reading of that passage from the Gospel where He said to His disciples: *Watch, that you enter not into temptation.*³⁷³ The whole of this passage is read there, and a second prayer is then said. Next, everyone, including the smallest children, walk down from there to Gethsemani, accompanying the bishop with hymns. Singing hymns, they come to Gethsemani³⁷⁴ very slowly on account of the great multitude of people, who are fatigued by vigils and exhausted by the daily fasts, and because of the rather high mountain they have to descend. Over two hundred church candles are ready to provide light for all the people.³⁷⁵

On arriving in Gethsemani a suitable prayer is first said, followed by a hymn, and then the passage from the Gospel describing the arrest of the Lord is read.³⁷⁶ During the reading of this passage there is such moaning and groaning with weeping from all the people that their moaning can be heard practically as far as the city. And from that hour everyone goes back on foot to the city singing hymns, and they arrive at the gate³⁷⁷ at the hour when men can begin to recognize one another. From there, throughout the center of the city, all without exception are ready at hand, the old and the young, the rich and the poor, everyone; and on this day especially no one withdraws from the vigil before early morning. It is in this fashion that the

bishop is led from Gethsemani to the gate, and from there through the whole city to the Cross.³⁷⁸

When they finally arrive before the Cross, it is already beginning to be broad daylight. There then is read the passage from the Gospel where the Lord is led before Pilate, and whatsoever words are written that Pilate spoke to the Lord or to the Jews, all this is read.³⁷⁹ Afterwards, the bishop addresses the people, comforting them, since they have labored the whole night and since they are to labor again on this day, admonishing them not to grow weary, but to have hope in God who will bestow great graces on them for their efforts. And comforting them as he can, he addresses them saying: "Go, for the time being, each of you, to your homes; sit there awhile, and around the second hour of the day let everyone be on hand here so that from that hour until the sixth hour you may see the holy wood of the cross, and thus believe that it was offered for the salvation of each and every one of us. From the sixth hour on we will have to assemble here, before the Cross, so that we may devote ourselves to prayers and scriptural readings until nightfall."

CHAPTER 37

After this, following the dismissal from the Cross, which occurs before sunrise, everyone now stirred up goes immediately to Sion to pray at the pillar where the Lord was whipped.³⁸⁰ Returning from there then, everyone rests for a short time in his own house, and soon all are ready. A throne is set up for the bishop on Golgotha behind the Cross, which now stands there.³⁸¹ The bishop sits on his throne, a table covered with a linen cloth is set

before him, and the deacons stand around the table. The gilded silver casket containing the sacred wood of the cross is brought in and opened.³⁸² Both the wood of the cross and the inscription³⁸³ are taken out and placed on the table. As soon as they have been placed on the table, the bishop, remaining seated, grips the ends of the sacred wood with his hands, while the deacons, who are standing about, keep watch over it. There is a reason why it is guarded in this manner. It is the practice here for all the people to come forth one by one, the faithful as well as the catechumens, to bow down before the table, kiss the holy wood, and then move on. It is said that someone (I do not know when) took a bite and stole a piece of the holy cross. Therefore, it is now guarded by the deacons standing around, lest there be anyone who would dare come and do that again.³⁸⁴

All the people pass through one by one; all of them bow down, touching the cross and the inscription, first with their foreheads, then with their eyes; and, after kissing the cross, they move on. No one, however, puts out his hand to touch the cross. As soon as they have kissed the cross and passed on through, a deacon, who is standing, holds out the ring of Solomon and the phial with which the kings were anointed.³⁸⁵ They kiss the phial and venerate the ring from more or less the second hour; and thus³⁸⁶ until the sixth hour all the people pass through, entering through one door, exiting through another. All this occurs in the place where the day before, on Thursday, the sacrifice was offered.³⁸⁷

When the sixth hour is at hand, everyone goes before the Cross, regardless of whether it is raining or whether it is hot. This place has no roof, for it is a sort of very

large and beautiful courtyard lying between the Cross and the Anastasis.³⁸⁸ The people are so clustered together there that it is impossible for anything to be opened. A chair is placed for the bishop before the Cross, and from the sixth to the ninth hours nothing else is done except the reading of passages from Scripture.³⁸⁹

First, whichever Psalms speak of the Passion are read. Next, there are readings from the apostles, either from the Epistles of the apostles or the Acts, wherever they speak of the Passion of the Lord. Next, the texts of the Passion from the Gospels are read. Then there are readings from the prophets, where they said that the Lord would suffer; and then they read from the Gospels, where He foretells the Passion. And so, from the sixth to the ninth hour, passages from Scripture are continuously read and hymns are sung, to show the people that whatever the prophets had said would come to pass concerning the Passion of the Lord can be shown, both through the Gospels and the writings of the apostles, to have taken place. And so, during those three hours, all the people are taught that nothing happened which was not first prophesied, and that nothing was prophesied which was not completely fulfilled. Prayers are continually interspersed, and the prayers themselves are proper to the day. At each reading and at every prayer, it is astonishing how much emotion and groaning there is from all the people. There is no one, young or old, who on this day does not sob more than can be imagined for the whole three hours, because the Lord suffered all this for us. After this, when the ninth hour is at hand, the passage is read from the Gospel according to Saint John where Christ gave up His

spirit.³⁹⁰ After this reading, a prayer is said and the dismissal is given.

As soon as the dismissal has been given from before the Cross, everyone gathers together in the major church, the Martyrium,³⁹¹ and there everything which they have been doing regularly throughout this week from the ninth hour when they came together at the Martyrium, until evening, is then done. After the dismissal from the Martyrium, everyone comes to the Anastasis, and, after they have arrived there, the passage from the Gospel is read where Joseph seeks from Pilate the body of the Lord and places it in a new tomb.³⁹² After this reading a prayer is said, the catechumens are blessed, and the faithful as well; then the dismissal is given.³⁹³

On this day no one raises his voice to say the vigil will be continued at the Anastasis, because it is known that the people are tired. However, it is the custom that the vigil be held there. And so, those among the people who wish, or rather those who are able, to keep the vigil, do so until dawn; whereas those who are not able to do so, do not keep watch there. But those of the clergy who are either strong enough or young enough, keep watch there, and hymns and antiphons are sung there all through the night until morning. The greater part of the people keep watch, some from evening on, others from midnight, each one doing what he can.³⁹⁴

CHAPTER 38

On the following day, which is Saturday, there is as usual a service at the third hour and again at the sixth

hour. There is no service, however, at the ninth hour on Saturday, for preparation is being made for the Easter vigil in the major church, the Martyrium. The Easter vigil is observed here exactly as we observe it at home.³⁹⁵ Only one thing is done more elaborately here. After the neophytes³⁹⁶ have been baptized and dressed as soon as they came forth from the baptismal font,³⁹⁷ they are led first of all to the Anastasis with the bishop. The bishop goes within the railings of the Anastasis, a hymn is sung, and he prays for them.³⁹⁸ Then he returns with them to the major church, where all the people are holding the vigil as is customary.³⁹⁹

Everything is done which is customarily done at home with us, and after the sacrifice has been offered, the dismissal is given. After the vigil service has been celebrated⁴⁰⁰ in the major church, everyone comes to the Anastasis singing hymns. There, once again, the text of the Gospel of the Resurrection is read, a prayer is said, and once again the bishop offers the sacrifice. However, for the sake of the people, everything is done rapidly, lest they be delayed too long. And so the people are dismissed. On this day the dismissal from the vigil takes place at the same hour as at home with us.

CHAPTER 39

The eight days of Easter are observed⁴⁰¹ just as at home with us. The liturgy⁴⁰² is celebrated in the prescribed manner throughout the eight days of Easter just as it is celebrated everywhere from Easter Sunday to its octave.⁴⁰³ There is the same decoration, and the same arrangement for these eight days of Easter, as for the Epiphany,⁴⁰⁴ both

in the major church and in the Anastasis, in the Cross as well as the Eleona, in Bethlehem, and in the Lazarium, too, and indeed everywhere, for this is Easter time.⁴⁰⁵

On that first Sunday, Easter Day, everyone assembles for the liturgy in the major church, in the Martyrium, and on Monday and Tuesday also. But it always happens that, once the dismissal has been given from the Martyrium, everyone comes to the Anastasis singing hymns. On Wednesday everyone assembles for the liturgy in the Eleona; on Thursday, in the Anastasis; on Friday, at Sion; and on Saturday, before the Cross. On Sunday, however, on the octave that is, they go once again to the major church, to the Martyrium.⁴⁰⁶ During the eight days of Easter, everyday after lunch,⁴⁰⁷ in the company of all the clergy and the neophytes⁴⁰⁸—I mean those who have just been baptized—and of all the *aputactitae*, both men and women, and of as many of the people as wish to come, the bishop goes up to the Eleona. Hymns are sung and prayers are said, both in the church which is on the Eleona and where the grotto in which Jesus taught His disciples is located, and at the Imbomon, the place, that is, from which the Lord ascended into heaven. After Psalms have been sung and a prayer has been said, everyone comes down from there, singing hymns, and goes to the Anastasis at the hour for vespers. This is done throughout the eight days.⁴⁰⁹

On Easter Sunday, after the dismissal from vespers at the Anastasis,⁴¹⁰ all the people singing hymns conduct the bishop to Sion. When they have arrived there, hymns proper to the day and the place are sung, and a prayer is said. Then is read the passage from the Gospel describing how on this day and in this very place where there is now

this same Church of Sion, the Lord came to His disciples, although the doors were closed, at the time when one of the disciples, namely, Thomas, was not there.⁴¹¹ When he returned, he said to the other apostles, who had told him that they had seen the Lord: *I will not believe, unless I see.*⁴¹² After this passage has been read, a prayer is again said, the catechumens and then the faithful are blessed, and everyone returns to his home late, around the second hour of the night.

CHAPTER 40

Then on Sunday, on the octave of Easter, immediately after the sixth hour⁴¹³ all the people go up to the Eleona with the bishop. First of all everyone sits down for a time in the church which is there; hymns are sung as well as antiphons proper to the day and to the place, and prayers also that are proper to the day and the place. Then, everyone, singing hymns, goes from there up to the Imbomon above; and what was done in the Eleona⁴¹⁴ is done in like manner again here. When it is time, all the people and all the *aputactitae*, singing hymns, lead the bishop to the Anastasis. They arrive at the Anastasis at the hour when vespers is customarily celebrated, and the vespers service is held both at the Anastasis and at the Cross.

From there, all the people without exception, singing hymns, lead the bishop as far as Sion. When they have arrived there, hymns proper to the place and to the day are sung as usual. Then they read the passage from the Gospel where, on the octave of Easter,⁴¹⁵ the Lord came into where the disciples were, and He reproved Thomas

because he had not believed.⁴¹⁶ The whole passage from Scripture is then read. After a prayer has been said and the catechumens and the faithful have been blessed according to custom, then everyone returns to his home at the second hour of the night, just as on Easter Sunday.

CHAPTER 41

From Easter to the fiftieth day, that is, to Pentecost,⁴¹⁷ absolutely no one fasts here, not even the *aputactitae*.⁴¹⁸ During the period the customary services are held at the Anastasis from the first cockcrow until morning, as is done throughout the year, and likewise at the sixth hour and at vespers.⁴¹⁹ On Sundays they assemble as always for the liturgy in the Martyrium, the major church, according to custom; then, from there, singing hymns, they go to the Anastasis. On Wednesdays and Fridays, since absolutely no one fasts here on these days, they assemble for the liturgy at Sion, but in the morning.⁴²⁰ The divine service is celebrated in the prescribed manner.⁴²¹

CHAPTER 42

On the fortieth day after Easter⁴²²—this is a Thursday—everyone goes to Bethlehem after the sixth hour of the day before, that is, on Wednesday, to celebrate the vigil.⁴²³ The vigil is held in the church in Bethlehem, the church where the grotto in which the Lord was born is located.⁴²⁴ On the following day, that is, on Thursday, the feast of the fortieth day,⁴²⁵ the divine service is celebrated in the prescribed manner,⁴²⁶ and as a result the priests and the

bishop preach, delivering sermons appropriate to the day and the place. And afterwards everyone returns in the evening to Jerusalem.

CHAPTER 43

On the feast of Pentecost,⁴²⁷ which falls on Sunday, the day on which there is the greatest strain on the people, everything is done exactly according to custom from the first cockcrow. The vigil is held in the Anastasis, so that the bishop may read the passage from the Gospel which is always read on Sundays, that of the Resurrection of the Lord. Afterwards, the customary ritual is carried out in the Anastasis, just as it is throughout the year. As soon as it is morning, all the people assemble for the liturgy in the major church,⁴²⁸ in the Martyrium, where everything customarily done is accomplished. The priests preach and afterwards the bishop. All the prescribed rites⁴²⁹ are accomplished, that is, the sacrifice is offered in the manner in which it is customarily done on Sundays. On this one day, however, the dismissal is moved up in the Martyrium, so that it is given before the third hour.⁴³⁰

As soon as the dismissal has been given in the Martyrium, all the people without exception, singing hymns, lead the bishop to Sion, but in such a manner that they are in Sion at precisely the third hour.⁴³¹ When they arrive, there is read from the Acts of the Apostles⁴³² that passage in which the Holy Spirit came down so that all tongues might be heard and all might understand what was being said.⁴³³ Afterwards the divine service is celebrated in the prescribed manner.⁴³⁴ Now the priests read there from the Acts of the Apostles that passage which is

read because this is the place on Sion—the church now is something else—where at an earlier time, after the Passion of the Lord, the multitude was gathered with the apostles, and where that which we mentioned above was done.⁴³⁵ Afterwards, the divine service is celebrated in the prescribed manner, and the sacrifice is offered.⁴³⁶ Then, just before the people are dismissed, the archdeacon raises his voice to say: “Today, immediately after the sixth hour, let us all be ready at the Imbomon on the Eleona.”⁴³⁷ All the people then return home, each one to rest in his own house.

Immediately after lunch, everyone, insofar as is possible, goes up to the Mount of Olives, that is to the Eleona, with the result that not a single Christian remains in the city, for they have all gone.⁴³⁸ As soon as they have climbed the Mount of Olives, the Eleona, that is, they go first of all to the Imbomon, that is, to the place from which the Lord ascended into heaven⁴³⁹ The bishop sits down there, and the priests and all the people, too. Passages from Scripture are read, hymns are interspersed and sung, and also antiphons proper to the day itself and the place are sung. The prayers which are interspersed are said in such a manner⁴⁴⁰ that they fit both the day and the place. Then the passage from the Gospel is read which speaks of the Ascension of the Lord;⁴⁴¹ then there is the reading from the Acts of the Apostles which speaks of the Ascension of the Lord into Heaven after the Resurrection.⁴⁴² When this has been done, the catechumens are blessed and then the faithful. Then at the ninth hour everyone comes down from there and goes, singing hymns, to the church which is also on the Eleona, that is to say, in that grotto where the Lord sat teaching the

apostles. By the time they arrive there it is already past the tenth hour. Vespers is held there, a prayer is said, the catechumens and then the faithful are blessed.

Then all the people without exception come down from there singing hymns, everyone together with the bishop singing hymns and antiphons proper to the day itself. And in this fashion they make their way slowly and easily⁴⁴³ to the Martyrium. When they reach the city gate, it is already night, and around two hundred church candles are brought out⁴⁴⁴ for the people. Since it is quite far from the city gate to the major church or Martyrium, it is definitely around the second hour of the night when they arrive, because they move slowly and easily all the way so that the people will not be tired out from walking. And when the great doors which are on the market street side⁴⁴⁵ are opened, then all the people, singing hymns, enter the Martyrium with the bishop.

After they have entered the church, hymns are sung, a prayer is said, and the catechumens and then the faithful are blessed. From there, everyone, singing hymns, then goes to the Anastasis. When they have arrived at the Anastasis, in like manner hymns and antiphons are sung, a prayer is said, and the catechumens and then the faithful are blessed. And the same thing is done at the Cross.⁴⁴⁶

Then all the Christian people without exception, singing hymns, lead the bishop to Sion. When they get there, appropriate passages from Scripture are read, Psalms and antiphons as well are sung, and a prayer is said. The catechumens are blessed and then the faithful, and the dismissal is given. Once the dismissal has been given, everyone comes forth to kiss the bishop's hand. Everyone then returns to his own home around midnight.

And so a great deal of toil is borne on this day, for the vigil at the Anastasis starts with the first cockcrow, and from then on throughout the whole day there is no stopping. Everything that is celebrated is drawn out to the point that only at midnight, after the dismissal has been given at Sion, does everyone return to his home.