

## TO N. N. GE'S (GAY'S) PAINTING

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### Christ's Last Discourse with His Disciples

At the top of the painting:

" A new commandment I give unto you. That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another."

At the edges, extracts from the Gospel of John, Chap. XIII. 1-35.

Beneath:

Jesus said: " Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy; but I say unto you, Love your enemies."

At the last supper Jesus showed this in his acts.

After washing the feet of His twelve disciples. He said: " I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you."

What was it that Jesus did, and what was the example which He gave to His disciples ?

When after the supper Jesus began to wash the feet of His disciples, and Simon Peter wanted to oppose Him, He said to him: " What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter. Ye are clean, but not all."

Neither Simon Peter, nor the other disciples understood what Jesus was doing, when, kneeling before them, he washed their feet.

After having washed the feet of His betrayer, Jesus got up, put on His garment, and, sitting down again, said:

" Know ye what I have done to ye ? Ye call me Master, and ye say well, for so I am."

But they knew not that Judas was the traitor, and did not understand what Jesus did or taught them.

Then, being troubled in spirit, Jesus said:

" Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you will betray me."

And again they did not understand what He did, or what He said to them. They only looked one on another, doubting of whom He spake.

Meanwhile the favourite disciple of Jesus was leaning on His bosom. But Simon Peter, raising himself, motioned to the favourite disciple, that he should ask the Teacher of whom He spoke. And the favourite disciple, leaning on Jesus' breast, asked Him.

But Jesus did not give a direct answer. He knew that if He named His enemy, His disciples would be provoked and would wish to rebuke the traitor. But, wishing to save Judas, and not to ruin him, Jesus, instead of answering, stretched out His hand, took a piece of bread, and said softly: " He it is to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it." And when He had given the sop to Judas, He said : " That thou doest, do quickly." The disciples, hearing this, thought that Jesus sent Judas to town to buy something that He had need of against the feast. But Judas understood that He was saving him from the wrath of His disciples, and immediately rose.

It is this that is represented in the painting.

The favourite disciple, John, alone knows who the traitor is. He leaped up from his seat and stared at Judas. He does not understand, does not believe, that a living man can hate Him who loves him. He is sorry for the unfortunate man, and is horrified at the same time.

Simon Peter guesses the truth from John's look, and looks around at John, and at Jesus, and at the traitor. And in his ardent heart flames up anger and the desire to defend his beloved Teacher.

Judas has arisen and taken up his garment, and is throwing it over himself and has made the first step. But his eyes cannot turn away from the saddened face of the Teacher. There is still time: he can turn back, fall down before His feet, repenting his sin. But the devil has already taken possession of his heart. " Do not submit," he says to him, " do not submit to your weakness; do not submit to the reproaches of the haughty disciples. They look at you and only wait for the chance to humble you. Go."

Jesus is lying, leaning on His arm ; He does not look at Judas, but He sees and knows what is going on in Judas' heart, and waits, and suffers for him. Jesus has with His hands fed His disciples, has with His hands washed the feet of His enemy, has saved him from human punishment, and until the end calls him with love to repentance, and forgives him. And yet Judas does not return to Him. And Jesus grieves on account of all those who do not come to Him.

Judas has gone, and has disappeared in the darkness of the night. The door has barely closed, when the disciples learn who the traitor is. They are agitated and provoked. Peter wants to run after him. But Jesus raises His head, and says: "Little children, yet a little while I am with you. ... A new commandment I give unto you. That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another."

It was only then that they understood that, by loving those who were in the world, He proved in fact that He would love them until the end.

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