My journal entry for November 11, 2026.

Cecilia, a christian, marries Valerian in the age of the Roman Church of the catacombs. But he is not one and he protests before the marriage is consumated with an initial touch that she denies. However, Cecilia, with real love, and real heroism, is the cause of his change of heart. I can't say more, it seems a profanation to me to comment. Read it yourself and wonder if I am not correct.

I am *Anonymous*

The Notebooks 1944
July 22
The Feast of St. Mary Magdalene

A beautiful, long vision which has nothing to do with the penitent saint I have always loved so much. I shall write it by adding sheets to this notebook because I am alone and use what is at hand.

I see the catacombs. Though I have never been in the catacombs, I understand this is what they are. I don't know which ones. I see the dark windings of narrow corridors dug in the earth, low-lying and humid, all of them made with sharp bends, like a labyrinth. One walks straight ahead, and it looks as though one can continue, or at least turn into another corridor, but one comes up against an earthen wall, and one must turn around and go back until discovering another passageway going further.

In them there are many niches ready to receive martyrs. Ready in this sense: each is slightly dug out in the wall to provide guidance for the grave diggers. That's the first impression. But the further in you go, the deeper and more complete the niches are, all of them set in the direction of the wall, like many berths on a ship. Others are, however, already filled with their holy mortal remains and enclosed and closed with a rough tombstone on which the name of each martyr or deceased person has been inexpertly chiseled, with the Christian signs, in addition to words of farewell or exhortation.

But these niches that are already completed and closed are

precisely in the area which I assume to be the central part of the catacomb, for here larger spaces often open out, like halls and rooms which are higher, adorned with drawings and better lit than the others by way of oil lamps scattered here and there out of devotion and for the convenience of the faithful whose own lamps flicker out for one reason or another.

There are also more people here, flowing in on all sides and greeting one another lovingly, in a soft voice, as the holy place demands. There are men, women, and children. Of all social conditions. Dressed like poor people and patricians. The women's heads are covered with a light cloth like muslin. It is certainly not a tulle veil, but is like a very thick gauze, more beautiful among the rich, more modest among the poor, dark for wives and widows and white for virgins. There are wives with children in their arms. Perhaps they had no one to leave them with and have brought them with them, and if the bigger ones walk alongside their mothers, the smallest, some of them infants, blissfully sleep under their mothers' veils, lulled by their mothers' steps and the slow, reverent songs rising up under the vaults. They look like little angels who have come down from Heaven and are dreaming of Paradise, at which they smile in their sleep.

The number of people grows, and they finally gather in a vast semicircular hall; at the apex of the circle is an altar facing towards the crowd. The hall is full of paintings and mosaics. I do not grasp clearly. I know there are colored depictions in which the most vivid or brightest shades and golden haloes of rays shine out. On the altar are many lights set aflame. Around the altar is a ring of virgins dressed and veiled in white.

An old man with a good, majestic appearance enters, blessing. I believe it is the Pontiff, for they all prostrate themselves in reverence. He is surrounded by priests and deacons and passes in the midst of the hedge of lowered heads with a smile of ineffable beauty on his face. The smile alone speaks of his sanctity. He goes up to the altar and prepares for the rite as the faithful sing.

The celebration takes place. It is almost like ours. Much more complex than the one seen in the Tullianum., celebrated by the Apostle Paul, and the one I saw at Petronilla's house.

The elderly celebrant, certainly a Bishop, if not the Pontiff, is helped and served by the deacons, whose clothing is quite differentfrom his, for, while he is wearing a robe (for the celebration) which, just by way of comparison, resembles the dressing gowns women use when combing themselves -- rounded mantles covering them in front and in back, as well as their shoulders and their arms almost down to their wrists -- the deacons wear a robe for celebration which is nearly the same as the current ones, extending down to their knees and with ample, short sleeves.

The Mass includes songs -- which I understand are passages from psalms or the Apocalypse -- readings from epistles or other biblical texts, and the Gospel, which the deacons take turns commenting on for the faithful.

When the Gospel reading is over -- it is sung by a young deacon -- the Pontiff gets up. I designate him in this way because I hear a mother indicating this to her child, who is rather restless. The passage selected was the parable of the ten virgins, wise and foolish.

The Pontiff says, "Proper to virgins, this parable is addressed to all souls, for the merits of the Blood of the Savior and Grace restore virginity to souls and make them like children waiting for the Spouse.

"Smile, O feeble elderly people; raise your heads, O patricians, who until yesterday were immersed in the slime of corrupt paganism; O mothers and wives, look with no more regret at your white innocence as girls. In your souls, you are not unlike these lilies the Lamb walks among, who now form a circle around his altar. Your souls possess the beauty of a virgin whom no kiss has touched when you are reborn and remain in Christ, our Lord. His coming makes the soul that was previously sullied and black with the most abject vices whiter than dawn on a snow-covered mountain. Repentance cleanses it and will purifies it, but love, the love of our holy Savior, a love coming from his Blood, which cries in a loving voice, gives you back perfect virginity. Not, indeed, that which you had at the dawn of your human life. But that belonging to the father of all, Adam, and to the mother of all, Eve, before Satan, leading them astray, passed over their angelic innocence,

the innocence which, as a divine gift, robed them in grace in the eyes of God and the universe.

"O holy virginity of the Christian life! A Bath of Blood, of the Blood of a God who makes you as new and pure as the Man and the Woman emerging from the hands of the Most High! O second birth of your life, into Christian life, the prelude to that third birth which will give you Heaven, when you ascend there, at God's signal, white from faith or purple from martyrdom, as beautiful as angels and worthy to see and follow Jesus Christ, the Son of God, our Savior!

"But today, more than to the souls restored to virginity by Grace, I turn to those enclosed in a virginal body, with a virginal will. To the wise virgins who have understood our Lord's loving invitation and the words of the virginal John and want to the Lamb forever in the array of those who did not experience contamination and will eternally fill the Heavens with the canticle which no one can say except those who are virgins out of love for God. And I speak to the woman strong in faith, hope, and charity who feeds tonight on the immaculate Flesh of the Word and fortifies herself with his Blood, as with a heavenly Wine, so as to be strong in his enterprise.

"One of you will rise from this altar to meet a destiny whose name may be 'death.' And she is going with trust in God, not with the faith common to all Christians, but with an even more perfect faith which is not limited to believing for herself, believing in divine protection for herself. But she believes for others, too, and hopes to take to this altar the man who, in the eyes of the world, will be her husband tomorrow, but in the eyes of God, her beloved brother. A twofold, perfect virginity which feels sure of its strength to the point of not fearing any violation, not fearing the wrath of a disappointed spouse, not fearing sensual weakness, not harboring a fear of threats, not fearing that hopes will be frustrated, and not fearing the danger and near certainty of martyrdom.

"Rise up and smile at your true Spouse, chaste virgin of Christ who go to meet man while looking to God, who go to take man to God! God observes you and smiles, and the Mother who was a Virgin smiles at you, and the angels encircle you. Rise up

and come to quench your thirst at the immaculate Fount before going to your cross and to your glory.

"Come, spouse of Christ. Repeat your love song to Him under these vaults, which are dearer to you than the cradle of your birth into the world, and take it with you until the moment when your soul sings it in Heaven while your body rests in its final sleep in the arms of this true Mother of yours, the Apostolic Church."

When the Pontiffs homily is over, there is a slight buzzing of voices, for the Christians are whispering and pointing to the group of virgins. But the hum is hushed by the others to restore silence, the catechumens are then brought forth, and the Mass continues.

There is no Creed. At least, I do not hear it being said. Some deacons pass among the faithful collecting offerings while others sing in their manly voices, alternating the stanzas of a hymn with the treble voices of the virgins. Spirals of incense rise towards the vault of the hall while the Pontiff prays at the altar and the deacons elevate the offerings collected in precious trays resting on their palms and in amphoras which are also precious.

The Mass then continues, just as it is now. After the dialogue preceding the Preface and the Preface sung by the faithful, a deep silence falls in which there are heard only the breathing and whispering of the celebrant, who prays, bending over the altar, and then straightens up and, in a clearer voice, pronounces the words of consecration.

The "Our Father" intoned by all is quite beautiful. When the distribution of the Species begins, the deacons sing. The virgins are the first to receive Communion. They then sing the song I heard at the burial of Agnes: *Vidi supra montem Sion Agnum stantem...* The canticle lasts as long as the distribution of the Species, alternating with the psalm "As the hind longs for the waters, so my soul longs for You, my God." (I think I have translated properly.)

The Mass ends. The Christians crowd around the Pontiff to be blessed by him individually and to take leave of the virgins he has addressed. These farewells take place in a nearby room -- an antechamber, I would say, of the church, properly speaking.

And they take place when the virgin, after praying longer than all the others present, rises from her place, prostrates herself at the foot of the altar, and kisses its edge. She really looks like a hind unable to detach itself from its fount of living water.

I hear them calling her: "Cecilia, Cecilia," and I finally see her face, for she is now standing beside the Pontiff, and her veil is slightly raised. She is very beautiful and very young. Tall, shapely in a graceful way, with very refined features, a lovely voice, and the smile and gaze of an angel. Some Christians say good-bye to her with tears; others, with smiles. Some ask her how she could ever decide on an earthly marriage; others, whether she does not fear the wrath of the patrician when he discovers she is a Christian.

One virgin is sorry she is renouncing virginity. Cecilia responds to her so as to respond to all: "You are mistaken, Balbina. I am not renouncing virginity at all. I have consecrated my body to God along with my heart and I will remain faithful to Him. I love God more than my relatives. But I still love them so much that I don't want to lead them to death before God calls them. I love Jesus, the eternal Spouse, more than all men. But I love men so much that I am resorting to this means so Valerian's soul will not be lost. He loves me, and I love him chastely; *I love him perfectly*, to the point that I want to have him with me in the Light and the Truth. I do not fear his wrath. I am hoping in the Lord so as to overcome. I hope in Jesus in order to make my earthly spouse a Christian. But if I am not victorious in this and martyrdom is allotted to me, I shall win *my* crown more quickly But, no...! I see three crowns descending from Heaven: two are the same, and one is made of three kinds of gems. The two that are the same are entirely red with rubies. The third has two bands of rubies encircling it and a large cordon of purest pearls. They await us. Do not fear for me. The power of the Lord will defend me. In this church we shall soon be gathered to greet some new brothers. Farewell. In God..."

They leave the catacombs. They all wrap themselves in dark mantles and slip away along the half-dark streets, for the dawn has just barely come.

I follow Cecilia, who proceeds with a deacon and some of the virgins. At the door of a large building they separate. Cecilia goes in with only two virgins. Perhaps two maids. The porter must be a Christian, though, for he greets her, saying, "Peace be with you!"

Cecilia withdraws into her rooms and prays along with the other two. She then has them prepare her for the wedding. They comb her very carefully. They clothe her in a very delicate dress of the whitest wool, adorned with a Greek fret in white-over-white embroidery. It seems to have been embroidered in silver and pearls. They place jewels on her ears, fingers, neck, and wrists.

The house begins to stir. Matrons and maids come in. A festive, continuous rushing to and fro.

I then witness what I think is a pagan marriage -- that is, the arrival of the bridegroom amidst music and guests and ceremonies of salutation and aspersion and such matters, and then the departure on a litter towards the bridegroom's house, thoroughly decorated for the feast. I notice that Cecilia passes under arches with bands of white wool and branches which look like myrtle and stops at the lararium, I think, where there are more ceremonies with aspersions and formulas. I see the two clasping hands and hear them saying the ritual phrases: "Where you are, Caius, there will I be, Caia."

There are so many of these people, more or less dressed the same -- togas everywhere -- that I don't understand who the priest for the rite is or whether there is one. I seem to be getting dizzy.

Then Cecilia, whose husband is holding her hand, circles around the atrium (I don't know if this is the right term), or the hall with niches and columns, where the lararium is, and salutes the statues of Valerian's forebears, I think. And she later passes under the new arches of myrtle and goes into the true house. On the threshold they offer her gifts and, among other things, a spindle and a distaff. An elderly matron gives them to her. I don't know who she is.

The celebration begins with the usual Roman banquet and continues amidst songs and dances. The hall is very sumptuous,

like the rest of the house. There is a courtyard -- I think it is called an *impluvium*, but I don't remember the names of Roman buildings clearly or know if I apply them properly -- which is a jewel of fountains, statues, and flowerbeds. The *triclinium* is between it and the dense, blossoming garden which is beyond the house. In the midst of bushes, marble statues, and very lovely fountains.

A long time seems to be going by, for the evening is falling. One can see that there were no food-rationing cards for the Romans. The banquet never ends. It is true that there are pauses for songs and dances. But the fact is...

Cecilia is smiling at her husband, who is speaking to her and looking at her lovingly But she seems a little absent-minded. Valerian asks her if she is tired and, perhaps to please her, gets up to send off the guests.

Cecilia withdraws into her new rooms. Her Christian maids are with her. They pray, and, to have a cross, Cecilia wets her finger in a cup which must be used for the dressing table and marks a slight dark cross on the marble of a wall. The maids take off her sumptuous gown and slip on a simple woolen dress and untie her hair, removing the precious hairpins and knotting it into two braids. Without jewels or curls, like this, with her braids over her shoulders, Cecilia looks like a girl, but I feel she must be between eighteen and twenty

A final prayer and a signal to the maids, who go out and return with other maids who are older, certainly from Valerian's house. In procession they go to a magnificent chamber, and the older women accompany Cecilia to the bed, which is almost like the Turkish -- style sofas today, except for the fact that the base is made of inlaid ivory and ivory columns are on the four sides, holding up a purple canopy. The bed, too, is covered with sumptuous purple cloth. They leave her alone. Valerian comes in and moves towards Cecilia, extending his hands. It is clear that he loves her very much. Cecilia smiles at his smile. But she does not go towards him. She remains standing in the middle of the room, for, as soon as the older women who had accommodated her on the bed went out, she got up again.

Valerian is surprised. He thinks they have not attended her

properly and is already angry with the maids. But Cecilia calms him down by saying that it was she who wanted to wait for him on her feet.

"Come, then, my Cecilia," Valerian says, trying to embrace her. "Come, for I love you so much."

"As I love you. But do not touch me. Do not offend me with human caresses."

"But, Cecilia...! You are my wife."

"I am God's, Valerian. I am a Christian. I love you, but with my soul in Heaven. You have not married a woman, but a daughter of God whom the angels serve. And the angel of God is with me to defend me. Do not offend the heavenly creature with acts of meager love. You would be punished for it."

Valerian is flabbergasted. At first amazement paralyzes him, but then anger at being mocked overcomes him, and he gets agitated and roars. He is violent, suffering disappointment when least expected. "You have betrayed me! You have tricked me. I don't believe it. I cannot, do not want to believe that you are a Christian. You are too good, beautiful, and intelligent to belong to that filthy bunch. Of course not...! It's a joke. You want to play like a child. It's your celebration. But the joke is too atrocious. That's enough. Come to me."

"I am a Christian. I'm not joking. I glory in being one because to be one means to be great on earth and hereafter. I love you, Valerian. I love you so much that I have come to you to take you to God, to have you with me in God."

"Curses upon you! You are mad and a perjurer! Why did you betray me? Don't you fear my revenge... ?'

"No, because I know you are noble and good, and you love me. No, because I know you do not dare to condemn without proof of wrongdoing. I am not guilty..."

"You lie in speaking of angels and gods. How can I believe this? I would have to see, and if I saw... If I saw, I would respect you as an angel. But for the time being you are my wife. I see nothing. I see you alone."

"Valerian, can you believe that I am lying? Can you, that know me, really believe this? Base people tell lies, Valerian.

Believe in what I am telling you. If you want to see my angel, believe in me, and you will see him. Believe in the one who loves you. Look -- I am alone with you. You could kill me. I am not afraid. The angel protects me under his wings. Oh, if you were to see him...!"

"How could I see him?"

"By believing in what I believe. Look -- over my heart there is a little roll. Do you know what it is? It is the Word of my God. God does not lie, and God has told us who believe in Him not to be afraid, for asps and scorpions will be left without poison at our feet..."

"But you also die by the thousands in the arenas...

"No. We do not die. We live eternally. Olympus does not exist. Paradise exists. In it there are no lying gods with brutal passions. But only angels and saints in the light and in heavenly harmonies. I hear them... I see them... O Light! O Voice! O Paradise! Descend! Descend! Come to make this Son of yours your own, this husband of mine. May your crown be for him first, rather than for me. For me, the pain of being without your affection, but the joy of seeing him loved by You, in You, before my coming. O joyous Heaven! O eternal marriage! Valerian, we shall be joined before God, virgin spouses, happy with a perfect love..." Cecilia is ecstatic.

Valerian looks at her in wonder, deeply moved. "How could I... how could I have this? I am a Roman patrician. Until yesterday I caroused and was cruel. How can I be like you, an angel?"

"My Lord came to give life to the dead. The dead souls. Be reborn in Him, and you will be like me. We shall read his Word together, and your wife will be happy to be your teacher. And I shall then take you with me to the holy Pontiff. He will give you complete light and grace. Like a blind man whose eyes are opened, you will see. Oh, come, Valerian! And hear the eternal Word singing in my heart."

And Cecilia takes her husband -- now entirely humble and calm, like a child -- by the hand and sits down at his side -- they have two spacious seats -- and reads the first chapter of the Gospel

according to St. John up to verse 14, and then chapter three, with the episode concerning Nicodemus.

Cecilia's voice is like the music of a harp as she reads those pages, and Valerian listens to them, first remaining seated, with his hands under his chin, resting his elbows on his knees, still a bit suspicious and incredulous, and then resting his head on his wife's shoulder and listening carefully with his eyes closed, and when she stops, he begs, "Go on, go on." Cecilia reads passages from Matthew and Luke, all of them suited to convincing her husband more and more, and she concludes by returning to John, reading from the washing of the feet on.

Valerian is now crying. The tears are falling without tremors from his closed eyelids. Cecilia sees them and smiles, but does not show she notices. After reading the episode of Thomas' incredulity, she becomes silent...

And they remain like that, one absorbed in God and the other absorbed in himself, until Valerian cries out, "I believe. I believe, Cecilia. Only a true God can have said those words and loved in that way Take me to your Pontiff. I want to love what you love. I want what you want. Do not be afraid of me any more, Cecilia. We shall be as you wish: spouses in God and brother and sister here. Let's go, for I do not want to delay in seeing what you see: the angel of your purity."

And Cecilia radiantly stands up, opens the window, and draws back the curtains so that the light of the new day will come in and makes the sign of the cross, saying the "Our Father" very slowly so that her husband can follow it, and then makes the sign of the cross, touching his brow and moving her hand over his heart. Finally, she takes his hand and takes it to his brow, his chest, and his shoulders in the sign of the cross and then goes out, continuing to hold her husband's hand, guiding him towards the Light.

I see no more.

But Jesus says to me:

"How much you have to learn from the episode concerning Cecilia! It is a gospel of Faith. For Cecilia's faith was even greater

than that of many other virgins.

"Consider. She goes to the wedding, trusting in Me, who said, 'If you had faith the size of a mustard seed, you could say to a mountain, "Withdraw." And it would move.' She goes there, sure of the triple miracle of being preserved from all violence, being an apostle to her pagan husband, and being free, for the moment, from all denunciation on his part. Sure in her faith, she takes a risky step, in the eyes of all; not in her own, for her eyes, fixed upon Me, see my smile. And her faith receives what it has hoped for.

"How does she go to the test? Fortified with Me. She rises from an altar to go to the trial. Not from a bed. She does not speak with men. She speaks with God. She does not lean on anything but Me.

"She loved Valerian in a holy way. She loved him beyond the flesh. An angelic wife, she wants to go on loving her spouse this way throughout true Life. She does not limit herself to making him happy here. She wants to make him happy forever. She is not selfish. She gives him what is his good: the knowledge of God. She faces danger to save him. Like a mother, she is not concerned about dangers provided she can give Life to another child.

"True Religion is never sterile. It provides the ardors of spiritual paternity and maternity which fill the ages with holy warmth. How many, over these twenty centuries, have poured themselves out, becoming voluntary eunuchs in order to be free to love, not a few, *but many* -- *all* the unfortunates!

"See how many virgins act as mothers for orphans, how many virgins as fathers for derelicts. See how many generous ones without a frock or uniform make their lives a holocaust to take the greatest indigence to God -- the souls that are lost and go mad in desperation and spiritual solitude. See. You do not know them. But I know them, one by one, and see them as the beloved of the Father.

"Cecilia teaches you something else. To deserve to see God one must be pure. She teaches this to Valerian and to you. I said, 'Blessed are the pure, for they will see God.'557

"To be pure does not mean to be virgins. There are virgins

who are impure and fathers and mothers who are pure. Virginity is physical and -- should be -- spiritual inviolateness. Purity is the chastity which lasts in the circumstances of life. In *all of them.* Those who do not practice and second lust and the appetites of the flesh are pure. Those who do not take delight in thoughts and conversations or spectacles which are licentious are pure. Those who, convinced of the omnipresence of God, always behave, whether alone or with others, as if they were in public are pure.

"Tell me. Would you do in the middle of a square what you take the liberty of doing in your rooms? Would you say to others whose good opinion you would like to preserve what you are turning over in your minds? No. For on a street you would incur in men's punishments, and, in the company of men, in their disdain. And why, then, do you act differently with God? Aren't you ashamed to appear before Him ag pigs, while you are ashamed to appear as such in the eyes of men?

"Valerian saw Cecilia's angel and had his own and led Tiburtius to God. He saw the angel after Grace had made him worthy, along with his will, to see the angel of God. And yet Valerian was not a virgin. He was not a virgin. But what merit to be able to tear oneself away from all inveterate pagan habits out of supernatural love! Great merit in Cecilia, who was able to keep affection for her husband in entirely supernatural spheres, with a doubly heroic virginity; great merit in Valerian, in being able to be reborn to the purity of childhood so as to come into my Heaven with a white stole.

"The pure in heart! A fragrant, blossoming flowerbed the angels fly over. Those strong in faith. The Rock on which my Cross rises and shines. A Rock whose every stone is a heart cemented to another in the common Faith binding them together.

"I refuse nothing to those able to believe and overcome the flesh and temptations. As with Cecilia, I grant victory to those who believe and are pure in body and thought.

"The Pontiff Urban spoke about restoring virginity to souls through being reborn and remaining in Me. Be able to attain this. It is not enough to be baptized to be alive in Me. One must be able to remain.

"An assiduous struggle against the devil and the flesh. But you are not alone in combating. Your angels and I Myself are with you. And the earth would head towards *true* peace if hearts were the first to make peace with themselves and with God, with themselves and their brothers and sisters, no longer being burned by what is evil and spurs towards ever-greater evil. Like an avalanche which begins with a trifle and becomes a huge mass.

"I would have so much to say to husbands and wives. But what good would it do? I have already spoken. Nor did people want to understand. In the decadent world, not only does virginity seem like an obsession, but chastity in marriage, continence, which makes man, Man and not a beast, is no longer regarded as anything but weakness and impairment.

"You are impure and drip impurity. You don't give names to your moral evils. They have three, which are always old and always new: *pride, greed,* and *sensuality.* But you have now reached perfection in these three beasts that tear you to pieces and that you go seeking with mad avidity.

"For the best ones I have offered this episode; for the others, it is useless, since it only causes a tickling of laughter in their souls, filthy with corruption. But you that are good -- remain faithful. Sing your faith in God with pure hearts. And God will console you by giving Himself to you, as I have said. To the good among the best, I will give complete knowledge of the conversion of Valerian through the merit of a pure, faithful virgin."