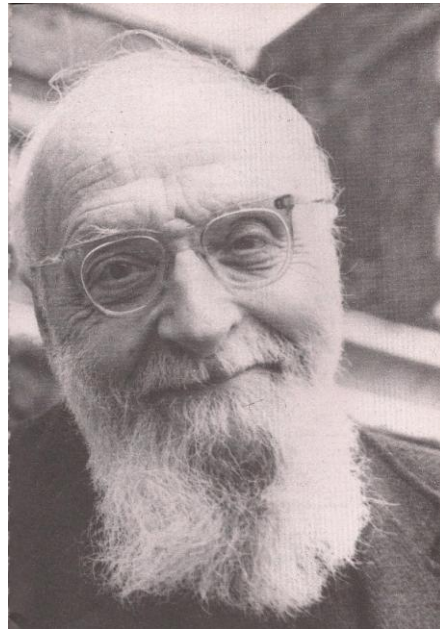


Lenten Reader 2010:

## *The Writings of Fr Lev Gillet*



Fr Lev Gillet was born on August 6, 1893 (as Louis Gillet) in Saint-Marcellin (Isère, France). After studying philosophy in Paris, he was mobilized during the First World War, held prisoner in 1914 and spent three years in captivity, where he was attracted by the spirit and the spirituality of the Russian prisoners. He studied mathematics and psychology in Geneva and joined the Benedictines in Clairvaux in 1919. Attracted by the Eastern Christian world, he becomes acquainted with Metropolitan Andre Szeptycki of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church in Galicia, and pronounced his final vows at the Studite Monastery of Ouniow in Galicia.

Disappointed by the attitude of the Catholic Church towards Orthodoxy, Father Lev was received into the Orthodox Church in Paris in May 1928, and in November 1928 he became the rector of the parish of Sainte-Geneviève-de-Paris, the first French-speaking Orthodox parish. In 1938 he left Paris to settle in London, within the framework of the Fellowship of Saint Alban and Saint Sergius, an ecumenical organization dedicated to the bringing together of the Anglican Church and the Orthodox Church. He remained in England until his death in 1980, going on many journeys abroad, in particular to France, Switzerland and Lebanon, where he took part in the spiritual revival of Antiochian Orthodoxy.

His principal publications (under the pseudonym "a monk of the Eastern Church") include: *The Jesus Prayer*, *Introduction to Orthodox Spirituality*, *The Year of Grace of the Lord: A Commentary on the Byzantine liturgical year*, and *Jesus, Simple Gazes to the Saviour*.

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## Lenten Reader 2010: The Writings of Fr Lev Gillet

{These passages are taken from two publications. Unless otherwise noted, page numbers are indicated as: LG - : *Lev Gillet: A Monk of the Eastern Church* by Elisabeth Behr-Sigel and YG – *The Year of Grace of the Lord*).

*[These initial texts introduce us to Fr Lev and some general themes. Texts specific to Great Lent begin with passage 10]*

- 1) The more I examine myself, the more I see that a life devoted to constructing and organizing, a life which produces results and which *succeeds*, is not my vocation – even though, out of obedience, I could work in this direction and even obtain certain results. What attracts me is a *vocation of loss* – a life which could give itself freely without any apparent positive result, for the result would be known to God alone; in brief, *to lose oneself* in order to find oneself.” (LG, 9 – 1928)
- 2) Let us reach out toward the men and women whom we pass in the street, the factory or the office ... with the name of Jesus in our heart and on our lips. Let us pronounce silently over them his name, which is their very own name. By recognizing and silently adoring Jesus imprisoned in the sinner, in the criminal, in the prostitute, we release in some way both these poor jailers and our Master. If we see Jesus in everyone, if we say “Jesus” over everyone we will go through the world with a new vision and a new gift in our heart. (LG, 10)
- 3) The Gospel is all that matters... I find contentment only in the Gospel.” (LG, 12)
- 4) Lord of Love, I thank you for the feminine dimension which you introduced into your universe and which you have linked intimately with the salvation of the world. Through it, better than through manly forces, you have often revealed to us certain aspects of divine love, of human love, and of cosmic love.” (1971)
- 5) Once in a lifetime you have to make up your mind to throw yourself into the sea and try to live literally according to the Gospel. (on his decision in 1938 to move to London from Paris)
- 6) We need a profound and liberating upheaval. An earthquake was needed to roll away the stone that sealed the tomb in the garden... Give me, Lord of Love, the great initial push! One stone striking another causes a spark to spring forth. Let the shock produced as the walls of separation roll back light in me the fire I desire and make me part of the Burning Bush. Let all these unhappy limitations be abolished by the grand incursion of limitless Love. (LG, 410-411)
- 7) Learn to discern where Love is. See and appreciate the situation in its full light. A situation may seem acceptable in human eyes and not be at all acceptable in my eyes. A situation may be valid according to every law and yet be invalid to me. Conversely, what men may judge irregular or blameworthy may be faultless before God. No human authority can be a judge of Love. It is I, the Lord of Love, who am the sole infallible judge of hearts. (LG, 409)
- 8) Master, I have so often and for so many years heard the call! How many times I have started on the way! And then I have fallen, I have not continued... I cannot say that I have followed you. I have lost sight of you, and yet I have always felt that you were there ...Master, would you grant me, perhaps for the last time, the grace of calling me? Master, I am on the way. (LG, 399)

- 9) “My Savior, I have enough to consider and to discuss concerning you... I should like simply to come close to you. Allow me to close the books. Let nothing stand between us any longer... Let me be absorbed, engulfed in your presence. May you alone speak to my heart. (LG, 397)

*[These texts are primarily reflections on Great Lent and Pascha]*

- 10) Lent – according to the liturgy of the presanctified – commemorates Israel’s forty years of wandering in the wilderness, those forty years during which the chosen people, having left the captivity of Egypt and crossed the Red Sea, went forward with faith towards the far-off promised land, receiving their earthly food from God in the form of manna and their spiritual food in the form of the Ten Commandments: sometimes they rebelled and fell into sin, but still they reached their goal. Lent also speaks to us of liberation, of pilgrimage, of crossing an arid desert, of the divine manna, of a meeting with God on Sinai, and also, of all and reconciliation. (YG, 109-110)
- 11) Lent recalls the forty days that the Lord Jesus spent in the desert during which he contended with Satan, the tempter. Our Lent must also be a period of fighting against temptation, and especially against the temptation of our most habitual sins. “You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve” (Luke 4:8). May it be granted to us, during Lent, to learn and understand these words with which the Lord opposed Satan, and which summarize the whole of the spiritual battle. (YG, 110)
- 12) One can see that Lent is a very rich, very deep agglomeration of different elements. They serve to purify and to enlighten us. During the time of Lent,

the Church leads us, as if by the hand, towards the radiant paschal feast. The more serious our Lenten preparation has been, the deeper we shall enter into the mystery of Easter and gather its fruits. (YG, 110)

- 13) General characteristics of Great Lent: The first of these is, of course, the fast. One cannot ignore or treat the question of fasting from food lightly. The Fathers of the Church and the collective conscience of the faithful have discerned clearly the spiritual value – a value which is both penitential and purifying – of abstention from certain foods. It would, however, be a serious mistake to think that this abstention constituted the only observance necessary to Lent. Bodily fasting must be accompanied by another fast. (YG, 118 - continued below)
- 14) In the first centuries the discipline of the Church prescribed conjugal abstinence during Lent: it forbade participation in feasts and attendance at public festivals. This discipline has perhaps become weakened, and is not presented to believers quite as forcefully as in the times of the Fathers. All the same, it remains as a precious indication of the spirit, the intention of the Church. But most surely, this intention is that during Lent we exercise a much stricter control over our thoughts, our words and actions, and concentrate our attention on the person of the Savior and what he requires of us. (YG, 118 – continued)
- 15) Almsgiving is also one of the forms of Lenten observance that the Fathers recommended most highly. A fast that is pleasing to God is therefore a “whole” which cannot be separated into inner and outer aspects; of the two the former are certainly the most important. (YG, 118)

16) *The Prayer of St Ephrem*: In this, neither poetry nor rhetoric play any part. We are here faced with a pure upsurge of the soul – short, sober, and full of ardor. This prayer, accompanied by prostrations, is said for the first time [at Forgiveness Vespers] is repeated during most of the Lenten services, especially in the liturgy of the presanctified. The prayer of St. Ephrem is widely known by Orthodox believers, this is its text:

*O Lord and Master of my life, take from me the spirit of sloth, despair, lust of power, and idle talk.*

*But give rather the spirit of chastity, humility, patience, and love to Thy servant.*

*Yea, O Lord and King, grant me to see my own transgressions, and not to judge my brother, for blessed are You, unto ages of ages. Amen.*

This prayer sums up all that is essential in the spiritual life. A Christian who used it constantly, who nourished himself from it during Lent, would be at the simplest and best school. Even someone who restricted himself to repeating and meditating on these words: “Lord and Master of my life,” would enter deeply into the reality of the relationship between God and the soul, the soul and its God. (YG, 119-120)

17) *The Sunday of Orthodoxy*: The word “Orthodoxy” was first used in connection with this Sunday in a fairly restricted sense. When it was first instituted, in 842, it marked the defeat of iconoclasm and proclaimed the legitimacy of the veneration of icons. Later, the scope of the word was extended. By “Orthodoxy” was understood the whole body of dogma upheld by the Churches in communion with Constantinople. An official document, the *Synodikon*, which anathematized by name all the leaders of

heresy, was read in the churches on this Sunday. It seems that Byzantine Christianity thought it a necessary duty to confess its faith at the beginning of Lent. (YG, 120 – continued)

18) Nowadays, we would probably be more concerned than was then the case to express ourselves with charity towards those who erred, and to separate the true from the erroneous in their thinking. But it was right and useful that the “Orthodox” Church should affirm its own attitude unambiguously. The “ecumenical” concerns which it shares nowadays with other Churches should not be a sign of any abandonment or watering down of its fundamental beliefs. And it is also necessary to weed out parasitic growths, and not to profane the adjective “orthodox” by allowing it to cover what might be either superstition or superfluity. (YG, 120)

19) **Sunday of Orthodoxy – Gospel**: Jesus speaking to Nathaniel about when he was under the fig tree (John 1:43-51): These words open a vast field for meditation. We do not know what Nathaniel was doing or thinking under the fig tree. Was it a moment of temptation, or of perplexity or grace – or simply one of rest. But it seems as if the Lord would not have mentioned this if it had not been a decisive moment, a turning point in Nathaniel’s life. In the life of each one of us, there has been a moment or perhaps moments, when we were “under the fig tree,” critical moments in which Jesus, himself invisible, saw us and intervened. Did we accept or repel the intervention? Let us remember these moments... Let us adore these divine interventions. But let us not rest in them, or try to live in a vision that is gone. “You shall see greater things than these.” Let us always be prepared for new grace, new vision. For the life of a disciple, if it is authentic, rises from light to greater light. We may see “the heaven open, and the angels ascending”

towards the Savior or descending to us. This is indeed a precious indication that familiarity with the angels should be habitual with us. The world of the angels is neither less close to us nor less loving than the world of men. (YG, 121-122)

20) ***The Second Sunday of Great Lent: Sunday of St. Gregory Palamas*** (Gospel of the paralytic, Mark 2:1-12): One notices that neither the epistle nor the gospel of this day have any bearing on St. Gregory Palamas, nor do the texts of the services go into detail elaborating on this emphasis of the “divine light”, but speak in a general way of light and of him who said: “I am the Light of the world.” In a considerably abridged form, one of the texts for matins brings together these ideas: that of Christ who illumines sinners, that of Lenten abstinence, and that of the word “arise,” which the Savior spoke to the paralytic, and which we now address to him: “To those who live in the darkness of sin, You have brought light, O Christ, at this time of abstinence. Show us therefore the glorious day of Your Passion, so that we may cry to You: Arise, O God and have pity on us.” (YG, 123)

21) ***The Third Sunday of Great Lent: Sunday of the Cross*** (Gospel: Mark 8:34-9:1) The Gospel brings us the very serious and urgent words of the Master: “Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel’s, the same shall find it.” Am I ready to follow Jesus, bearing my cross? (Not the cross that I may choose, but the one he himself places on my shoulders.) Am I ready to accept all the trials or sufferings which may come to me, as sharing in the Cross of the Savior? When, in due course, it is my turn to come and place a kiss on the cross which is displayed in the middle of

the church, will my kiss be that of an unrepentant sinner, the kiss of Judas, or will it be a gesture which is respectful and superficial but changes nothing in my life, or will it be a sign of adoration, of faith, and of tenderness which will be binding on my whole life? (YG, 124)

22) ***The Fourth Sunday of Lent: Sunday of St. John of the Ladder***: (Gospel: Mark 9:16-30): The father of the boy filled with the dumb spirit cries out: “Lord, I believe, help my unbelief.” We could find not better way to express both the fact of our faith’s existence, and of its weakness. But do the same burning tears fall from our eyes when we say to our Savior: “I believe, help my unbelief.” Jesus takes pity on the father. He accepts such a faith, and heals the son. Later, speaking to the Master privately, the disciples ask him why they were not able to cast out such a spirit. Jesus answers: “This kind can come forth by nothing but by prayer and fasting.” We must not imagine that prolonged fasting and repetitive prayer will suffice to give us a power which the disciples did not yet possess. Prayer and fasting, in the deepest sense, mean a radical renunciation of self, a concentration of one’s soul in an attitude of trust and humility which leaves *all* to the mercy of God, the submission of our will to the will of the Lord, placing our whole being in the hands of the Father. He who – by the grace of God – reaches this state is able to cast out demons. Could we not take at least the first steps along this path? If we tried, we should be astonished by the successes that follow. (YG, 125-126)

23) ***The Fifth Sunday of Lent: Sunday of St. Mary of Egypt***: (Gospel: Mark 10:32-45) The Gospel describes Jesus’s ascent to Jerusalem before His Passion. Jesus takes the twelve apostles aside and starts to tell them that he will be betrayed, condemned and put to death, and that he will rise again from the dead.

At the threshold of Holy Week could we be “taken aside” by the Savior for a talk in which he explains to us, personally, the mystery of Redemption? Do we ask the Master to help us understand at greater depth what is taking place for our sakes on Golgotha? Do we make it possible for Jesus to meet us in secret? Do we seize opportunities to be alone and quiet with the Lord? Then the sons of Zebedee come to Jesus and ask him to let them sit with him in his glory, one on his right and the other on his left. Jesus asks them – and puts the same question to us: “Can you drink of the cup that I drink of? The Master then explains to the disciples that true glory lies in serving others. For “the Son of man came not to be ministered to but to minister, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (YG, 126)

24) ***Feast of the Annunciation (March 25):*** There are really two sides to the Annunciation. One of them turns towards the most holy Mother of God and concerns her glory and our devotion to Mary. The declaration of this glory and the expression of this devotion find their perfect form in the first words of the angel’s message: “Hail, O Full of Grace, the Lord is with you.” We cannot address the holy Virgin better than by repeating these words, with veneration and tenderness. The other side of the mystery turns towards humans. In the life of every Christian there will be divine annunciations, moments when God lets us know his will and his intention concerning us. But all these annunciations must unite to become the one essential Annunciation: the Annunciation that Jesus can be born in us, can be born through us – not in the same way that he was conceived and brought into the world by the Virgin Mary, for that is a unique miracle that cannot be equaled – but in the sense that the Savior takes spiritual and, at the same time, very real possession of our being. And then let us remember that

every authentic Annunciation is immediately followed by a Visitation: the divine favor that has been granted to us must straightaway release an impulse in us to let it flow out to our brothers and sisters, which is expressed through some loving word or act. This is why the gospel reading at matins for the Annunciation is the account of Mary’s visit to Elizabeth. Immediately after her meeting with Gabriel, the Mother of God goes to her cousin, to share with Elizabeth and John the radiance of its grace. (YG, 128-129)

25) ***Lazarus Saturday:*** (Gospel: John 11:1-45) The resurrection of Lazarus allows a sinner to hope that, even though he seems spiritually dead, he could come alive again: “So I pray to You, O Lover of mankind, to raise me to life, who through my passions am dead ...” Sometimes this spiritual resurrection seems as impossible as that of Lazarus: “Lord, by this time he stinks, for he has been dead four days...” For all things are possible to Jesus – the conversion of the most hardened sinner as much as the raising of the dead: “Jesus said, “Take away the stone...” (YG, 137)

26) ***Holy Week:*** We now enter the most sacred week of the year. It starts with the feast of Jesus’s entry into Jerusalem, which, taken with the raising of Lazarus, forms a prelude of joy and glory to the harrowing humiliations which are to follow. The Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday of Holy Week are a preparation for the Passion. They already have a strongly accented character of mourning and repentance. The Thursday, Friday and Saturday of Holy Week belong to the paschal solemnities – each one of these days reveals to us a special aspect of the mystery of Easter. One could even say that this mystery has three aspects, each of which corresponds to a day: Holy Thursday, Holy Friday, and Holy Saturday. One could also say that each

of these three aspects corresponds to a place: the Upper Room, Golgotha, the Holy Sepulcher. Holy Thursday commemorates the mystery of the upper room. Holy Friday, the mystery of Golgotha. Holy Saturday the mystery of the tomb of Christ. On the Thursday, in the upper room, Jesus, through a sacramental action, both announces and represents, consecrates and offers what is to take place during the following days. On the Friday, at Golgotha, Jesus, by his death of the Cross, accomplishes our redemption. On the Saturday, Jesus rests in the tomb; but the Church, already looking ahead to the Feast of Easter Sunday, speaks to us of the victory over death that our Savior has won. This anticipation of the Resurrection on Holy Saturday allows us to say that the mystery of Christ's Resurrection, triumphantly celebrated on Easter Sunday, already belongs, although incompletely, to Holy Week. And so this week constitutes a summary of the whole economy of our salvation. (YG, 138)

**27) Behold Your King Comes: Palm**

**Sunday** From the first day of Holy Week, we must "receive" Jesus Christ and accept that his will is sovereign over us. The meaning of Palm Sunday lies in this welcome given to the Christ who comes to us...The crowd shouted, "Hosanna! Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord." If I can say these words with complete sincerity and submission, if they mean that the impulse of my whole being goes towards the King whom, from henceforth, I acknowledge, then, in that instant, I have turned away from sins and have received Jesus Christ. May He be welcomed and blessed, He who comes to me. (YG, 140, 142)

**28) As the Lightning Comes out of the East – Holy Monday:** There is a striking contrast between the "spirit" of Palm Sunday and that of Holy Monday. Palm

Sunday spoke to us of the coming of the King. Holy Monday announces the coming again of the Son of Man, at the end of time. But, whereas the entry of our King into Jerusalem – and his entry into our soul now, if we will but allow it – reveals humility and tenderness, the second coming, which the Church contemplates on Holy Monday, will be more like a sudden and violent catastrophe. Before his death, Jesus gives humanity a serious warning. (YG, 142)

**29) Be Therefore Ready – Holy Tuesday:**

Holy Tuesday continues to develop the theme of the coming of Christ and of the judgment he will exercise over humans. There is, however, a shade of difference between Holy Monday and Holy Tuesday in the way this theme is treated. Yesterday, the accent was placed on the objective conditions of suddenness and terror that accompany the second coming. Today, the divine Revelation concentrates especially on the vigilance that the prospect of this judgment calls for from us, and on the inner preparation which is necessary. (YG, 144)

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**30) To What Purpose This Waste – Holy**

**Wednesday:** Holy Wednesday faces us with the contrast between two figures, two states of soul. It is devoted to the remembrance of two actions: the action of the woman who, at Bethany, came to pour a jar of precious ointment on Jesus's head, and the action of the disciple who betrayed His Master. These two actions are not without a certain link, for the same disciple had protested against the apparent prodigality (extreme generosity) of the woman. (YG, 146, continued)

31) Jesus approved of the woman's actions, first because it was homage, rendered to him in anticipation of his death and burial, and then because it was an expression of great love which could, for the short time of life he still had left,

legitimately be shown him, whereas the poor would always be there. But can we find in these words of Jesus's a clear directive for our own actions? It seems that we can. For one thing, Jesus blesses the woman's prodigality because of certain special circumstances: the fact of Jesus's visible presence among human and of the near approach of his burial. But, now that these circumstances no longer exist, the duty is different. While we need not condemn offering riches and beauty to the service of God, it is above all through those members of the mystical body who suffer that we are able to honor its Head. For it would be offensive to God if sumptuous churches were built while the poor were allowed to die of hunger. (YG, 147, continued)

32) The episode at Bethany, however, has a significance that goes further than the offering of a jar of ointment. It is not only through material goods that we can still give generously to Jesus, but also by consecrating to him our intangible wealth: for example, a life of prayer, an ascetic or contemplative life, or some costly sacrifice which seems useless. The world will protest, as did the disciples at Bethany: to what purpose this prodigality, this waste? Would not a normal life, devoted to the service of others, be of much more use? And yet assessment of the "value of loss" remains the nerve of all religion that is truly alive. If we have the duty to do what we can in cases of real and obvious distress before concerning ourselves with cultural luxury, we have the right, in what concerns only ourselves, to pour invisible *ointment* on Jesus's head - that is to say to "lose" for his sake (but in reality to gain) the best of our life. Our heart is the first jar of ointment that we must break before him, for him. (YG, 147, continued)

33) The case of Judas is so terrible and obscure that we do not dare to try and explain it or enter into it. But let us keep

in mind a sentence from the "Bridegroom Service" for Holy Wednesday: "The ungrateful disciple, who You had filled with Your grace, has rejected it." It is indeed possible to reject grace, even when one has been filled with it. And how many Christians are there who, during the course of their lives, have not said to their ruling passion - the flesh, money, or pride: "I am ready to sell Jesus to you. Tell me what pleasures you will give me, and I will deliver him to you?" (YG, 147-148)

34) **Holy Thursday:** Holy Thursday takes us into the mystery of the Passover. It both commemorates and makes present to us the first part of this mystery, the part that was unfolded in the Upper Room...The Lord Jesus, really present both as he who distributes and as he who is distributed, gives himself to us in the Eucharist...The Eucharist, before it becomes the presence of Christ in us, is the sacrifice of Christ for us. As this feast of Holy Thursday, it is particularly important to remember the link which our Lord wanted to establish between the meal in the upper room and the Jewish Passover, and between this same meal and the Passion. Every eucharist is a sacrificial meal. Each time that we make our communion with the body of Christ that has been broken and with his blood that has been shed, we are in communion with his Passion, and take part in his sacrifice. (YG, 148, 152)

35) **Golgotha - Holy Friday:** On Holy Thursday we followed Jesus to the upper room. Today, Holy Friday, we follow him up to Golgotha. We will follow him, not as Peter followed him, from "afar off... to see the end," but as his mother, as John and the holy women, who did not abandon him...Jesus's Cross must be placed at the center of my life. The Cross of Jesus: not only an instrument of suffering, but an instrument of victory. To make Jesus's sacrifice the center of my life - of my

thought, my will and my feelings – to look at men and things from the perspective of the Cross, to be convinced that nothing is of greater importance to the world than Christ’s sacrifice, eternally present and offered; in this lies the “second conversion,” the new and dazzling vision which reduces to insignificance what fascinated us before. This vision demands a radical change of our whole life. Jesus crucified becomes the filter through which, from now on, we shall make everything pass. The day when a man understands the “centrality” of the Cross – of the radiant Cross as well as of the blood-stained Cross – is the great day of his life. May this Holy Friday be a birthday in my life. (YG, 158)

36) “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” In this statement is contained the most complete, most profound explanation of the Savior’s passion. The greatest love is the highest possible kind. It demands a giving of oneself which continues right unto death. Golgotha is not a requirement of justice, but one of love. (LG, 398)

37) “Were you there when they crucified my Lord?” This line from a spiritual asks a very real and poignant question. Am I there where they crucify my Lord? Am I capable of developing, according to the dimensions of the universal, present-day Golgotha, my poor imagination which is so narrow, so centered on itself? Can I make myself present in the agonies of Christ’s body which are felt by every man whom the devil seeks to devour, agonies often caused by men, sometimes in your name, O Christ? Can I make myself present at Christ’s intimate conversation with every unfortunate person? An intimate conversation? Yes, on the one hand a human head, and on the other, the Holy Face, and bruised and ridiculed? I shall be present at these

conversations if I carry within me the image of that Holy Face. (LG, 398-399)

38) **Holy Saturday:** The peace of Holy Saturday is entirely oriented towards the great event of Sunday morning, towards the power and the joy of the Resurrection. But we have to safeguard this peace “which waits”: Oh! That invasion of external preparations for Easter, which prevents so many Orthodox from keeping this feast as a retreat and in silence. On this day, let us read again the words of Paul to the Romans: “We are buried with him by baptism into death... Likewise reckon yourselves also to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive to God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” If I were able to persuade myself sufficiently that I was dead with Jesus, buried with Jesus, my spiritual lie would become so much simpler and easier. To every temptation, to everything that distracted me from the one thing necessary, I should answer only: “What is the point? I am dead. I am in the tomb of my master.” Instead of arguing and fighting with life, I should place myself straight away on the other side, outside life (naturally, this means the desires of worldly life), and then, dead to the world and to sin. I should be more than ever alive “in God.” One could even say that in this there is a spiritual tactic, a singularly efficacious tactic, open to those in all walks of life, of “entombment” with our Lord. We have sung today: “I praise Your entombment.” We might now add: “Grant that I may be entombed with You.” ((YG, 161)

39) **PASCHA:** Lord Jesus, each morning can be for me the “first day of the week,” the feast of the Resurrection. Let each morning be Easter morning for me ... Let each day, each awakening bringing me the joy of Easter, also bring me the most profound conversion ... a conversion by which I will turn from your image of yesterday to your image

of today. Let me know you, in every situation and in every person, as you wish to be know that very day, not as you appeared to me yesterday, but as you are now. It will be a conversion and an upheaval that is not without violence, but you demand it. These new people, these new situations, through which I shall meet you may be many and varied. Every time I engage in recollection, may I be awakened to your presence in this diversity – a “paschal” encounter with the Christ in the garden,” this Christ sometimes so unexpected. (LG, 401)

Mary of Magdala, teach me these things. You made your final commitment when you joined the group of women who followed Jesus. They followed him more faithfully than the apostles ... Let me hear the unique word, the personal call by name which Jesus reserves for me and that he utters day after day, hour after hour, and that he will continue to utter until the moment when I will perhaps be able truly to love him, whom you have loved so much ... Let me renounce everything if he utters my name. (LG, L352)

- 40) The proper name, the only name uttered in the Easter garden, was a dedication, a seal placed on a long and passionate journey of love, whatever the historical problem of the “three Marys” may be, Mary in the garden, hearing her name, could relive the steps of the “way of Magdala,” the tears washing the feet of the Savior, the hair that dried them, the anointing of oil on the head of Christ the “anointed one, “ the flask broken and the perfume released, the spices taken to the Sepulcher, the choice of the best part at the feet of the Master, the first vision of the resurrected One.

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*O strange Orthodox Church, so poor and weak, with neither the organization nor the culture of the West, staying afloat as if by a miracle in the face of so many trials, tribulations and struggles; a Church of contrasts, both so traditional and so free, so archaic and so alive, so ritualistic and so personally involved, a Church where the priceless pearl of the Gospel is assiduously preserved, sometimes under a layer of dust; a Church which in shadows and silence maintains above all the eternal values of purity, poverty, asceticism, humility and forgiveness; a Church which has often not known how to act, but which can sing of the joy of Pascha like no other. – [from Fr Lev's 1937 funeral homily for Archimandrite Irénée (Louis-Charles) Winnaert, the founder of the Orthodox Church of France]*

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