

Documents

Meditation

This meditation was written by a young Russian Orthodox Christian living in the Soviet Union.

My Creator, I am Your slave, ready for anything, a slave for the humblest task. Yes, a slave – I am not ashamed of that word in our humanistic age.

They are ashamed, they do not want to be slaves. They are willing to be scoundrels, but not slaves. They study You. They say that You are not good – and that means that You do not exist. You are not good, because we are suffering. They do not want to be happy slaves, they want to suffer but to be free citizens, and they say that You are cruel because they are suffering. They think themselves good, and do not want to do good for payment, they want to do it disinterestedly – but they do nothing at all. They do not understand that all this humanism – all talk and no action – is the smile of the devil on the stupid face of the intellectual. The devil is laughing at them, but they are pleased with themselves.

They, they, they . . . But I? I, Lord, understand everything and do nothing. But whoever knows and does what deserves punishment will be beaten all the more. Stopping my foul mouth, full of swearing and spite, I, the “slave for the humblest task”, make no reply to those who insult me, but under my breath I hiss spiteful, nasty oaths. Secretly, on the sly, imperceptibly. For them but not for You. I see that spite is destroying me. For evil designs crawl out of me, like worms out of a corpse, twisting and

strangling. Even in the half-hour between confession and Holy Communion I manage to spray out tons of filth from my sick mind and my sick heart, and off it flies, only to fall again upon my soul, my pure, snow-white soul, and You, O Lord, do not enter into communion with me.

Again and again and again I repeat with hope, which is stronger than truth:

“O God, be merciful unto me, a sinner!”

And I know. I know as one knows even before one is born, that if I say a quadrillion times:

“O God, be merciful unto me, a sinner!”

Your strength will flow into me, and the withered, accursed fig-tree will revive, flourish, and put forth good, maternal leaves. O my soul! O my soul! Arise, why are you sleeping?

It will arise, because the grace of God is stronger than earth, than nature, than lameness, than deformity, than spite, than anything which is invincible on earth and makes doctors shrug their shoulders.

I know now, Lord, that You are not obliged to be good. Can the sand which You have brought to life demand anything else? If You wish, You will leave it, and if You wish You will scatter it, and would it not be ridiculous for the sand to demand anything else? Would we not think it ridiculous if the pattern

on a frosted window were to demand justice from the weather, or if the paper on which we write were to bring us to trial? It's nonsense, that's all.

I would love You, Lord, even if you were evil, like a hot, dry wind. I would simply not notice Your evilness, just as a normal son loves his father.

When I realized that You could be evil, that You are not obliged to us in any way and are always right, then I understood all Your goodness to me and to us.

And now I thank You all the more for Your love. For You could withhold love, You are not obliged to love, and You have no judge.

Let misfortunes rain down on my head like water, let them drum and drum and drum, whispering: "Curse, curse, curse Him, that is the only freedom You have," — I will merely lower my head further and clench my teeth harder, I will not say anything to anyone and I will not hear anything from anyone. Tears of gratitude will stream from my eyes. I will not wipe them away and feel ashamed. I have nothing to be ashamed of. I will kiss Your hand, light the lamp, kneel down and whisper a prayer of gratitude, because I have realized that for me happiness lies only

in misfortune. Why do You love me so, Lord, why do you trust me so? Not as a slave, but as a friend.

By faith a man is saved. And where there is faith, there will be deeds. As misfortunes multiply, I grow even less like my former self; I believe all the more, and I live in faith. Lord, is this what You wanted?

I believe that when I have drunk the whole cup that You have given me, drunk it to the dregs, on the far side of suffering, which *they* call madness, there will be a door, and I will go through that door, and there will be a blue sky and a warm blue sea. I shall swim and swim, barely moving the tips of my fingers, now in the blue sky, now in the warm sea. But it is not a sea, but a caress, a whole sea of caresses for me alone, a worm like me, and it is not a sky but grace, sheer, boundless grace, without pebbles or thorns. Eternity for me alone. Others have their own eternities. In my Father's house there are many mansions. Glory to Thee, O Lord.

I will not hurry You. You Yourself know when; when I will be able to drain the cup. Your devoted slave. What a beautiful word.

Moscow 1972

Lithuanian Catholics Appeal to the Pope

The article "Lithuania and the Vatican" (pp. 4-11) examines the background to the present situation of the Roman Catholic Church in Lithuania. The following appeal, sent to Pope Pius XII in 1948 by Lithuanian Catholics, reveals the pressures imposed on the Church, pressures remarkably similar to those still existing today.

Holy Father, Shepherd of Catholics!

By the commission of our Lord Jesus Christ, you are the leader and shepherd of all Catholics. Therefore we, Roman Catholic Christians of the Republic of Lithuania, appeal to Your Holiness for help [. . .]

The writers describe the difficult history of Lithuania up to that point, including the Terror under the Soviet occupation.

Eighty-five per cent of Lithuanians

are Roman Catholic. The influence of religion upon our people has been and still is today very strong. Our nation has a particularly deep reverence for the Virgin Mary. Pius XI called Lithuania the Land of Mary. Religious images and crosses used to stand on all the streets and roads of our land, like symbols of the suffering of our nation. The Bolsheviks are well aware that our people will be able to resist as long as the influence of religion remains intact. That is why our Catholic faith has to bear the heaviest blows of the occupation [. . .]

The Bolsheviks have subjugated all religion. At the present time, they exploit the Russian Orthodox Church, but assiduously spread atheism.

In Lithuania, too, religious services are partially permitted. But the Catholic clergy are supposed to act as informers.