

Thematic meditations

**MONDAY**



**THAT HE MAY REIGN**

**ON EARTH AS IN HAEVEN**

43<sup>e</sup> Pèlerinage de Pentecôte  
de Paris à Notre-Dame de Chartres

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# The Ways to Ensure Christ Reigns Over Society

## MEDITATION 8

### Opening Thought

Dear pilgrims,

Recently, a well-known French politician, who openly identifies as Catholic, declared that while he personally opposed abortion, he had consistently voted in favor of laws supporting it. He explained that he did not wish to mix his private life (his personal opinions, including his religious beliefs) with his public life, where, as an elected official, he felt duty-bound to serve everyone. Some of you may also recall the infamous statement by a former French president who claimed that “no moral law is superior to the laws of men.”



### Introduction

In contrast to these views, and based on the Magisterium of the Church, we believe that Our Lord's will must be done "on earth as it is in heaven" and that societies have a duty to render worship to God both individually and socially. The Church must work to imbue the mentalities, customs, laws, and structures of communities with a Christian spirit, even when Christianity becomes a minority religion.

Having explored how we can begin by building small “islands of Christianity,” let us now reflect on how Christians can influence society as a whole to reflect the spirit of Christianity.

### The Defense of Natural Law

Dostoevsky once said, “If God does not exist, everything becomes permissible.” This is precisely what we have seen with naturalism, liberalism, and the secularism of society. The rejection of the spiritual realm and of God has led to the rejection of natural order — that is, a set of values and realities that “precede” man and are inscribed in his nature by the One who created it: God. If there is no transcendent truth, then there is no reliable principle to guarantee just relationships among people.

This is the role of natural law — a rule of objective reason (universal and unchanging, the same for all) written and engraved in the heart of every human being. It commands us to do good and prohibits us from doing evil. It reflects God's law: by following it, we draw closer to God and fulfill His will; by departing from it, we harm creation and offend God.

Through natural law, man is equipped to discern good from evil. While original sin makes it harder (though not impossible) to recognize this law in our hearts, God has clarified it for us through His Revelation, particularly in the Ten Commandments handed to Moses on Mount Sinai: "Thou shalt not kill," "Thou shalt not steal," etc.

With the coming of Christ, this natural law remains unchanged. Jesus did not abolish it but illuminated it with the new commandment: love of God and neighbor, inviting us to observe this law not out of fear but out of love.

As Cardinal Ratzinger (later Pope Benedict XVI) emphasized in a crucial text, “There are moral principles in political life that admit no exception, compromise, or derogation. [...] In these essential ethical demands, Christians must understand that the very essence of the moral order is at stake, touching upon the integral good of the person.”

The text then highlights specific areas of natural law where Christians are called to act:

- **The Sanctity of Life:** “This includes civil laws regarding abortion and euthanasia, which must protect the fundamental right to life from conception to natural death. Similarly, the rights of human embryos must also be respected and safeguarded.”
- **Family:** “It is vital to protect and promote the family, founded on monogamous marriage between individuals of different sexes, safeguarded in its unity and stability. This is especially important in light of modern laws on divorce. No other form of cohabitation can be legally equated with it, nor granted recognition.”
- **Education and Children’s Rights:** “Parents have the inalienable right to educate their children. Likewise, the social protection of minors and the liberation of those subjected to modern forms of slavery (e.g., drug abuse or exploitation through prostitution) must be ensured.”
- **Economy:** Natural law is often reduced to bioethical issues or pro-life advocacy. However, it also encompasses social justice: “Thou shalt not steal.” This means establishing economic structures that serve the common good and the Church. For example, creating networks of businesses that dedicate a portion of their profits to the common good, ensuring ethical working conditions, fair wages, respectful management practices, adherence to holidays, and rejection of anti-Christian propaganda.

## Christianizing Through Culture

When considering the involvement of Christians in politics, thoughts often turn to political parties, elections, or pro-life demonstrations aimed at changing societal structures. While all these actions are valuable and necessary, the Church also proposes another form of engagement—what could be called a “meta-political” effort—to transform not only societal structures but also the dominant culture.

In *Caritas in Veritate* (2009), Pope Benedict XVI observed how human lives are regulated by two main forces: politics and economics. He called for the emergence of a third force to humanize these systems—a cultural and moral force rooted in civil society and centered on God. He noted, “The ideological closure towards God and the atheism of indifference, which forget the Creator and risk forgetting human values as well, are among the greatest obstacles to development today. Humanism which excludes God is an inhuman humanism.”

### Restoring the Church Tower to the Heart of the Village

The political fight to which Catholics are called is first and foremost a cultural battle aimed at transforming not only political structures but also an entire worldview. Catholics must recognize the immense influence of culture on a society’s destiny.

## Concrete Ideas for Action

### 1. Engage in Culture: Christianize Through Culture

- A concert can achieve more than a thousand lectures! Art and culture (cinema, photography, books, comics, paintings, sculpture) stir the passions and communicate powerful messages. Consider the role of places like *Le Puy du Fou* and other initiatives that convey beauty, truth, and God through cultural expressions.

### 2. Promote Beauty: The Created Reflection of God

- Beauty will save the world, while ugliness is often a sign of evil. We should cultivate beauty everywhere: in our homes, personal appearance, churches, language, relationships, artistic tastes (music, cinema, art). Beauty reflects God and inspires souls to seek Him.

### 3. Transmit Ideas: Fight the Intellectual Battle

- Those gifted intellectually must engage in this battle by obtaining degrees, teaching in schools or universities, writing books, creating YouTube videos or podcasts, developing magazines, working in journalism, and contributing to the media. Culture is deeply shaped by intellectual efforts.

### 4. Support Sports

- Sports are a powerful vehicle for promoting Christian ideals and were historically championed by Catholic structures. Consider athletes who boldly express their faith before millions of spectators. Catholics should re-engage in sports clubs of all kinds and confidently embrace their faith in these environments. Sports also serve as excellent pedagogical tools.

### 5. Preserve and Defend Heritage

- Churches, roadside crosses, and shrines are tangible, public testimonies of Christianity. They must not be neglected. Equally important are castles, old homes, and the traditions left by our ancestors. We should also protect intangible heritage—local customs and traditions often rooted in Christianity.

### 6. Promote Christian Civilization Through Public Gestures

- Initiatives such as public Nativity scenes, live crèche performances, street concerts, the restoration of crosses, and pilgrimages can help bring Christian culture into the public square and make faith visible to all.

## How to Participate in Political Life

John Paul II wrote: *“The lay faithful absolutely cannot renounce participation in ‘politics,’ understood as the multifaceted action—economic, social, legislative, administrative, cultural—aimed at organically promoting the common good through institutions.”*

From what John Paul II describes, we can distinguish between **“the political”** (any action aimed at the common good of society) and **“politics”** (in the narrower sense, involving political parties or elections).

Political life in this second sense is a necessity for society, and Christians cannot remain indifferent to it, as the consequences of political action have a profound impact on bringing people closer to or farther from Christ.

Should Christians, therefore, participate in politics? The Church has established rules for Catholic involvement in politics, affirming, for example, that “a well-formed Christian conscience does not permit anyone to vote for a political program or law that contradicts fundamental principles of faith and morality.”

At the same time, politics is the science of the possible. Voting for the “least bad” candidate—the one who minimizes harm—is also a moral choice. In this area, the pursuit of the perfect can become the enemy of the good. We must resist the temptation of maximalism, which waits for the ideal candidate—who does not exist. Progress must come step by step, incrementally, as our opponents to Christianity often demonstrate so well.

Father Calmel offered an important insight:

*“Those who desire not only justice but all justice, and immediately, in civil society, lack a sense of politics. They fail to understand that the life of a city unfolds over time and that a certain duration is necessary to correct and improve. Above all, they do not comprehend the inevitable intertwining of good and evil to which human society has been condemned ever since its definitive banishment from the paradise of justice and joy. To attempt to immediately destroy all injustice is to unleash even greater injustices.”*

Moreover, there are multiple levels at which political engagement is possible. For instance, the local municipality is the first level of local life and a sphere of responsibility that directly impacts citizens’ daily lives. There is a shortage of Catholic mayors. The *Association of Mayors for the Common Good* is one example of an initiative addressing this need.

Everyone can also influence elected officials by making their actions known (since these are public), or by informing them directly and guiding their decisions through advice. Examples include the work of *Alliance Vita*, the *Lejeune Foundation*, and the *March for Life*.

Public demonstrations (not only for pro-life causes but also to expose major scandals) are also part of political life. While they may not always yield immediate results, they can unite Christians, awaken them (as in 2013), and sometimes force issues onto the public agenda.

## A Civilization of Love!

Everything we’ve discussed must be illuminated by a fundamental principle: building the “civilization of love.” This expression, often repeated by John Paul II, originates with Pope Pius XII. It refers to making Christ’s charity shine through society via social action.

It is because we love life and family that we defend them. It is out of charity that we build bonds of Christian friendship.

Beyond this, Christians working for Christ the King must become champions of charitable works that make society truly human—because they are illuminated by Christ’s love for the weakest. It is concerning that traditional Catholic communities are often lacking in initiatives aimed at alleviating human suffering. This calls for a true examination of conscience and perhaps a rebalancing of our efforts in service of society.

## Concrete Examples

- **Everyone should take on a charitable commitment each year**, even if it is occasional. For example:
  - Organizing or supporting *St. Vincent de Paul* conferences.

- Participating in soup kitchens, outreach to the homeless, visiting the sick, prisoners, or lonely people.
- **Defending the weakest**, fighting against injustices.
- **Solidarity among Christians**, including supporting middle-class families within our parishes who struggle to make ends meet.
- **Supporting Christians in the Middle East** and other persecuted communities.
- And much more—charity is infinitely creative!

Dear pilgrims, there is a place for every talent! As we conclude this pilgrimage, the question we must ask ourselves is: *How can I put my gifts, my talents, at the service of the common good and Christ the King?* Let us free ourselves from the bonds of individualism and selfishness that plague society and stifle goodwill. What am I doing in my life to build the reign of Christ? We have no right to sit idly by to avoid getting our hands dirty: *"They have clean hands, but they have no hands,"* as Péguy said.

Let us be clear: we are not promising an earthly paradise. As Father Calmel put it: *"A Christendom is forged through the Cross, and it lives through the Cross. Furthermore, it is not eternal; it is a fleeting phase. It is a rare and short-lived moment when the scandal of corrupt institutions is finally overcome—not through an idyllic transformation of the world but through heroic effort in a world of sin. The kingship of Christ over our perishable cities does not turn them into havens of peace. In fact, it complicates their existence because it demands a fidelity to natural law that is neither easy nor guaranteed once and for all."*

Nevertheless, we firmly believe that when Jesus Christ is known and acknowledged, when the laws of a nation observe and uphold natural order as much as possible, and when truth triumphs publicly over error (for yes, Jesus is the Truth), souls are better off. Let us get to work!

## Quotations

**Pope Francis**, Address to the Laity, December 3, 2017, Bogota:

*"How is it possible that Catholics appear practically absent from the political arena, or completely assimilated into a worldly logic?"*

He added: *"There are many who call themselves Catholic—and we are not given to judge their consciences, but their actions—but often they show little consistency with the ethical and religious convictions of Catholic teaching."*

Continuing: *"There are some so absorbed by their political commitments that they end up relegating their faith to the background, impoverishing themselves and failing to serve as a reference or to leave their mark on every dimension of life, including their political practice."*

**Alexandre Solzhenitsyn**, Speech at Harvard:

*"Your Western system is heading toward its ultimate stage of spiritual exhaustion: soulless legalism, formal humanitarianism, the abolition of interior life (...). But one day, the abyss will open to the light, and small flickering fireflies will emerge from the great catacomb, carried by dissidents."*

**Etienne Gilson**:

*"Christendom, in its very essence, is a participation of human cities in the unity of the City of God."*