

Thematic meditations

**SATURDAY**



**THAT HE MAY REIGN**

**ON EARTH AS IN HAEVEN**

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

7, 8 et 9 juin 2025



# "Instaurare omnia in Christo" - Saint Pius X

## INTRODUCTION

Dear pilgrim,

We have just left Paris, this magnificent city, which, unfortunately, has also become a symbol of a country that seems to have renounced its Christian identity. Of course, buildings like Notre-Dame de Paris and many others remain, but do they still have a soul? In the face of growing atheism and the neglect of God in human societies, one might be tempted to give up, to live simply among ourselves, and to think that, after all, the time of Christendom is over and that we must accept the course of history.

Well, no, dear pilgrim! This year, we have chosen an essential theme for the pilgrimage, one that goes against the current, a pillar of our pilgrimage since 1983: "That He may reign, on Earth as in Heaven!" Christ is King, and He must reign not only in our hearts but also in the societies of the Earth and its institutions. During these three days of walking, we want to deepen this immense truth, awaken the sometimes too-dormant consciences of Christians, and remind ourselves, along with the Church, that it is our mission, as laypeople, to work at our own level so that society is once again imbued with "the sweet law of Jesus Christ." This requirement was strongly emphasized by Pope Saint Pius X in a famous formula: "*Instaurare omnia in Christo*" - to restore all things in Christ. With him and with the Church's teaching on this point, we will begin our pilgrimage.



## The incredible destiny of a postman's son

The eighth child of a modest family in Veneto, Giuseppe Sarto was born in Riese on July 2, 1835. His father was the postman of the commune. Giuseppe received a simple and pious Christian education from a deeply Catholic family. He later entered the seminary of Padua and was ordained a priest on September 19, 1858. His pastoral qualities and dedication led him to assume increasingly important responsibilities year after year; in 1884, he was appointed Bishop of Mantua; in 1893, Leo XIII appointed him Patriarch of Venice and later Cardinal. At the death of Leo XIII, the conclave was convened: out of frugality, Cardinal Sarto purchased a round-trip ticket to Rome, not imagining for a moment that he would be elected. However, that is what happened: he entered the conclave as a cardinal and emerged as Pope, taking the name Pius X.

From his first encyclical, he established the motto for his entire pontificate, quoting the Epistle to the Ephesians: "*Instaurare omnia in Christo*" – "To restore all things in Christ." This is the motto of Catholic action itself: to seek to make Christ present in all the daily realities of our lives because He is Lord of all things. It is, par excellence, the motto of the Christian layperson engaged in society.

## Supporting the faith of Christians

For Saint Pius X, this restoration begins with safeguarding Catholic doctrine, that is, its principles. At that time, a heresy called "modernism" was spreading more and more. It spoke of returning to a supposed lost purity of the Gospel, questioned the historical truth of the Gospels, presented Faith as a religious feeling, rejected Tradition, and claimed that dogmas should change with the times. Saint Pius X warned all Catholics in the encyclical *Pascendi Dominici Gregis*, denouncing the ambiguous language of these writings and condemning modernism as the "sewer of all heresies."

But Saint Pius X did not stop at condemnation; he was concerned with education because he believed that every Christian must deeply know their faith to be a courageous witness to Christ, a light to the world. To this end, he produced a synthesis of faith elements called "The Catechism of Saint Pius X." Dear pilgrim, remember that "one cannot give what one does not have!" Do not settle for vague memories of your childhood catechism; continue to read and educate yourself so that you may be the salt of the earth in a world that has forgotten God but, perhaps unknowingly, thirsts to know Him.

## Restoring societies

Saint Pius X was Pope during a time of great upheaval among nations, which rejected their Christian past: especially in France, with the 1905 law separating Church and State and the persecution of religious congregations. In the face of this storm, Saint Pius X continued to publicly affirm the rights of Jesus Christ over earthly cities: *"We must recall vigorously,"* he wrote, *"in these times of anarchy: the city cannot be built otherwise than as God has built it [...]* No, civilization does not need to be invented anew, nor does a new city need to be built in the clouds. It has been, it is; it is Christian civilization, it is the Catholic city. It only needs to be established and restored continuously on its natural and divine foundations against the ever-recurring attacks of unhealthy utopia, rebellion, and impiety: *instaurare omnia in Christo!*"

## Is Christ's reign an outdated doctrine?

One might think that such a vision of Christian society is a beautiful utopia, a dream that could still be indulged in at the beginning of the 20th century but is entirely outdated today. However, dear pilgrim, know that contrary to what many say, Catholic doctrine remains unchanging: it is Christ Himself who affirms it; He is Truth itself, and what was true yesterday will be true until the end of time.

## After Saint Pius X

After Saint Pius X, Pope Pius XI wrote two major encyclicals on the reign of Christ, which I encourage you to read: *Ubi Arcano* in 1922, and especially *Quas Primas* in 1925. It is, in fact, to celebrate the 100th anniversary of this encyclical that our pilgrimage has chosen the theme of Christ the King for 2025. Pius XI's vision was prophetic: he believed that only the reign of Christ could counteract the madness of men, beginning to manifest through the totalitarian ideologies of the 20th century. Unfortunately, time would prove him right. Following the horrors of war, he wrote: *"The evils afflicting the universe stem from the fact that most men have dismissed Jesus Christ and His holy law from their lives, both individually and in their family and public lives. A lasting hope of peace among nations can never shine forth as long as individuals and nations refuse to recognize and proclaim the sovereignty of our Savior. [...] The peace of Christ must be sought through the reign of Christ."* That is

why, on December 11, 1925, he instituted the liturgical feast of Christ the King, celebrated on the last Sunday of October.

Pope Pius XII summarized the importance of Christ's kingship in a beautiful phrase: *"The good or evil of souls depends on whether society conforms or does not conform to divine laws."* Yes, dear pilgrim, Christ's reign over our societies matters; it concerns the salvation of souls!

## What of this doctrine today?

Some argue that the clear doctrine of Christ's sovereignty has evolved since Vatican II, particularly with the declaration on religious freedom in the constitution *Dignitatis Humanae*. They claim that, post-Vatican II, we can no longer strive to establish Christian states or insist that public life be subject to the social kingship of Christ because it might conflict with individual religious freedoms, especially in pluralistic societies. As a result, states should remain entirely neutral regarding religion to preserve freedom of religion.

It is true that many have interpreted Vatican II as a break with this teaching, seeing it as an endorsement of religious indifference on the part of states, thereby discouraging laypeople from fulfilling their duty to "convert nations." Furthermore, the obligation to uphold Christ's kingship over society has not been widely taught since the council, and some have even opposed it. However, despite these interpretations or even ambiguities in the text, the Catechism of the Catholic Church, written during the pontificate of John Paul II, provides clarity on this doctrine in alignment with Catholic tradition.

The Catechism states: *"Jesus Christ is Lord: He possesses all power in heaven and on earth."* Therefore—here is the most important point—*"The duty to offer God genuine worship concerns man both individually and socially. This is the traditional Catholic doctrine on the moral duty of individuals and societies toward the true religion and the one Church of Christ. By continually evangelizing men, the Church works to ensure that they may imbue the mindsets, habits, laws, and structures of the community in which they live with the Christian spirit."* The Catechism further quotes the encyclicals *Immortale Dei* (Leo XIII) and *Quas Primas* (Pius XI), showing continuity with traditional doctrine.

## The Role of the Laity

Dear pilgrims, resist the siren calls of resignation and defeatist Catholicism. Listen to the Church as it reminds you of the vocation of the laity: your mission on earth. As stated in the Catechism: *"The specific vocation of the laity consists in seeking the Kingdom of God precisely by engaging with temporal realities and ordering them according to God's will. The initiative of Christian laypeople is particularly necessary when it comes to discovering and inventing ways to imbue social, political, and economic realities with the demands of Christian doctrine and life. This initiative is a normal element of Church life: laypeople are at the forefront of the Church's mission. Through them, the Church is the vital principle of society."* Furthermore, the Catechism encourages: *"Let the laity unite their efforts to improve institutions and social conditions in the world that provoke sin, so that these may become conformed to justice and foster virtue instead of hindering it. In this way, they imbue human culture and works with moral value [...] for no human activity, even of a temporal nature, can be exempt from God's dominion."*

## The Virtue of Religion

In addition to evangelizing and Christianizing society and culture, laypeople must work to ensure that every level of society, every intermediary body, is officially and institutionally subject to Christ's authority.

## Conclusion

Dear pilgrim, the motto of Saint Pius X speaks directly to you today: restore all things in Christ. In the coming meditations, we will delve deeper into this and consider concrete ways to act. For now, it is time to break free from individualism, which causes us to focus solely on our personal comfort without realizing that we need society to thrive, and that society is unwell. Let us ask for the strength to be witnesses. As Saint Pius X wrote: *"Today more than ever, the chief strength of the wicked lies in the cowardice and weakness of the good, and all the nerve of Satan's reign resides in the softness of Christians."* You have three days, dear pilgrim, to discover how you can act to make Christ reign. As John Paul II said: *"New situations in the Church, as in the world, demand today, more than ever, the action of lay faithful. No one is permitted to remain idle."*