

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

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# France, Eldest Daughter of the Church, Are you faithful to the promises of your Baptism?

Dear pilgrim friends,

Courage, this is the last meditation of the day!

So far, we have studied the doctrine: Christ is King, and His reign must be acknowledged on Earth as it is in Heaven. But perhaps in your heart, dear pilgrim, you are thinking that this is an impossible dream! "France, Eldest Daughter of the Church, are you faithful to the promises of your Baptism?" Pope John Paul II asked us in 1980. Since then, things seem to have worsened: the number of practicing Catholics has dwindled to almost nothing; the whole world witnessed the blasphemies at the opening ceremony of the Olympics in France against our faith; our country has voted to enshrine abortion in its constitution and has planned to legalize euthanasia, etc.

Should we then give up and retreat into ourselves? No, it is with hearts full of hope that we want to work toward building a new Christendom. But first, it is essential to make a clear and lucid diagnosis to understand the ailments afflicting our society, how apostasy was able to develop, and how it can be healed. That is the purpose of this meditation.



## From Christendom to Laicism

A society that lived according to Christian principles existed in France from 496 to 1790. Without idealizing this long period (France experienced some very grave disorders during that time), the key difference compared to our era is that those disorders stemmed from individuals' actions rather than being consecrated by society itself. The problem today is that the errors lie in the very principles that modern society openly claims. We will examine them in detail by exploring:

1. The doctrinal causes of apostasy in **naturalism** and **liberalism**;
2. A brief history of its origin, namely the **French Revolution** and its consequences, which implemented these doctrines and led to **laicism**;
3. Finally, we will address the weakness of Catholics—**our weakness**.

## Naturalism

Naturalism is, in a way, the original error, which is why the popes have condemned it so strongly. Cardinal Pie defined naturalism as "the doctrine that disregards Revelation and claims that the sole powers of reason and nature are sufficient to lead man and society to perfection."

It seeks to bring about human happiness by cutting off everything that transcends reason or nature, and in particular, by excluding God. In this sense, naturalism is a rebellion against God—it is the repetition of Satan's sin of pride, through which he sought to achieve his own happiness without God, without dependence on Him: "*non serviam*"—"I will not serve."

Naturalism refuses to acknowledge that human happiness lies in the beatific vision of God and that we need His grace to attain it. Moreover, it denies that humanity is wounded by original sin and that we need grace not only to reach the supernatural goal of Heaven but also to heal our wounded nature and live fully human lives on this Earth. Grace not only elevates nature; it also heals it.

Applied to the political order, naturalism teaches that society must be governed without taking religion into account, as though it does not exist, and without distinguishing between the true religion and false religions.

Take care: as we saw this morning, it is essential to distinguish between the temporal and the spiritual, the natural order and the supernatural order. The error lies not in making a distinction but in separating the two and promoting a society entirely closed in on itself, cut off from God. Rejecting God is not neutrality but falsehood, for by our very nature, we are dependent on God. We need Him, and we are made for the celestial beatitude.

## Liberalism

Naturalism, having severed humanity from its ultimate end (God), naturally gives rise to its offspring: liberalism. Liberalism is the rejection of any rule or authority that comes from above humanity, especially from God. "My freedom is my only rule," declares the liberal.

In this, however, the liberal is gravely mistaken about the true nature of freedom. True freedom does not consist in the ability to act wrongly whenever one wishes. Experience shows this clearly: sin does not make us free; on the contrary, it enslaves us. For example, the drunkard who drinks excessively imagines himself free to do as he pleases, but in reality, he is bound by the chains of addiction, as he refuses to follow the rule written in his heart.

On the contrary, the natural law inscribed in human hearts is a guide to achieving true happiness, the happiness that genuinely suits us. True freedom, therefore, is the ability to advance by oneself on the path toward our true happiness—God—and to take responsibility for our actions. To reach this true happiness, God has shown us a sure path through His law: do good, avoid evil. Freedom is thus the power man has to fulfill God's law of his own accord. This is his dignity: the ability to do good freely and voluntarily.

## The French Revolution

The French Revolution put the theories of naturalism and liberalism into practice. To confirm this, one need only read the 1789 Declaration of the Rights of Man:

- "The principle of all sovereignty resides essentially in the nation; no body or individual may exercise authority that does not emanate expressly from it" (Article 3).
- "The law is the expression of the general will" (Article 6).

Thus, the Revolution recognizes no authority above the nation: it is a rejection of Christ the King. Consequently, the law governing society (i.e., positive law) is no longer the expression of the natural

law inscribed in our hearts, which itself reflects God's law. Instead, law has become the expression of human desires and wills. This is truly the Revolution—literally a "turning upside down"—that lies at the root of the moral confusion and lack of guidance in our society today.

The Revolution, therefore, was founded on a rejection of God, Christ the King, and Christendom. To understand this, one can revisit the writings of Jean Ousset (*Pour qu'il Règne*) and Jean Madiran (*Une civilisation blessée au cœur*).

Among the evils inherited from the Revolution is the legacy of socialism, exemplified in the early 19th century by utopian socialists like Fourier and Saint-Simon, as well as by the anarchist theories of Proudhon and Bakunin. By the early 20th century, Karl Marx's theories had taken root in France and abroad, leading to a Marxist influence on politics, media, and education. This contributed significantly to the anticlerical struggle, an influence that persists to this day.

## Laicism and Secularism

The child of the French Revolution and anticlerical socialism is the laicism we live under today, which should not be confused with Christian secularism.

As we saw earlier, Christian secularism properly recognizes the autonomy of the temporal order. The Church is not meant to govern nations or impose the Gospel as the constitutional law of a state. However, the temporal order, which concerns the common good of humanity, must remain "open" to the spiritual, because the citizens of a state are also called to become saints—including Caesar!

Laicism, or modern secularism, by contrast, turns this distinction into separation, even opposition: spirituality and religion are banished from the public sphere. The French Revolution violently persecuted the Church and installed a new religion—the cult of reason. Although the Concordat brought a temporary cessation of persecution, the attacks quickly resumed. Jules Ferry declared: "My goal is to organize humanity without God." This second wave of persecution culminated in the 1905 law of separation between Church and State, a law that remains in effect today. This new secularism is defined as "a state of religious neutrality, independent of all Churches and confessions."

This thesis was quickly condemned by the popes. Saint Pius X stated: "This thesis of the separation of Church and State is a clear denial of the supernatural order." Similarly, John XXIII remarked: "The most sinister aspect of the modern era lies in the absurd attempt to build a solid and fruitful temporal order without God—the sole foundation on which it can stand."

Pope John Paul II echoed this sentiment: "[The culture of the West today] is marked by the dramatic claim to achieve human good without God, the Supreme Good. But a creature without its Creator fades away... A culture that refuses to refer to God loses its soul along with its orientation, becoming a culture of death, as evidenced by the tragic events of the 20th century and the nihilistic consequences now apparent in large parts of the Western world."

On December 13, 2000, Solzhenitsyn spoke of "the deep crisis that is emerging... Five centuries ago, humanism embarked on a seductive project: to borrow from Christianity its luminous ideas, its sense of good, its sympathy for the oppressed and the poor, its affirmation of free will for every human being, but while attempting to dispense with the Creator of the universe."

Chesterton similarly observed: "The modern world is full of old Christian virtues gone mad," because they attempt to exist without God and lack any norms or reference points. Bernanos added: "One understands absolutely nothing about modern civilization if one does not first admit that it is a universal conspiracy against any kind of inner life."

For silence about God amounts to a denial of Him. Consider just one example: an education that does not speak of God is not "neutral" education; it is anti-religious, atheistic, and therefore deceptive education.

## And the Catholics, in all of this?

Let us heed the harsh but truthful words of Pope Saint Pius X at the time of the beatification of Joan of Arc:

*"The principal strength of the wicked is the cowardice and weakness of the good, and the entire nerve of Satan's reign resides in the complacency of Christians."*

We must admit it: we are children of liberalism, the French Revolution, and modernity. It is far easier to follow the currents of the world, to accept this division between the world and Christ.

Thus, we must fight the revolutionary spirit that infects us. Let us boldly combat the infernal triad of **lukewarmness, human respect, and liberal attitudes**:

1. **Lukewarmness**

The more one progresses in love, the more fervent one becomes. Lukewarmness is not a "reasonable" or moderate middle ground; it is a lack of love. As the Apocalypse tells us:

*"Because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of my mouth."*

2. **Human Respect**

This is the fear of human judgment, an attitude that leads to conformist behaviors driven by concern about what others may think. Let us remember the words of the Gospel: *"Whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven."*

Dear pilgrim, dare to go against the current of the world to follow Christ!

3. **Liberal Attitude**

This is the belief that Catholicism can coexist with the anti-Christian principles that govern our societies today. This mindset ultimately abandons any desire to establish the true reign of Christ the King.

## Conclusion

Dear pilgrims, this difficult assessment should not discourage us, but rather inspire us to hope and concrete action. For although it is God who works miracles, He always uses men—and saints—to accomplish His work. Providence counts on us.

How do we proceed? This will be the focus of the meditations over the next two days. Dear pilgrim, a soldier for Christ the King, pray, educate yourself, discern, and act with persistence. Keep in your heart the beautiful prophecy Saint Pius X once made about our country:

*"The people who entered into covenant with God at the baptismal font of Reims will repent and return to their first vocation. Their sins will not go unpunished, but they will not perish—the daughter of so many merits, so many sighs, and so many tears. A day will come—and we hope it is not far off—when France, like Saul on the road to Damascus, will be surrounded by a heavenly light and will hear a voice saying: 'My daughter, why do you persecute me?' And in response, 'Who are you, Lord?' the voice will reply, 'I am Jesus, whom you persecute. It is hard for you to kick against the goad, for in your obstinacy, you destroy yourself.' And she, trembling and astonished, will say: 'Lord, what do you want me to do?' And He will respond: 'Rise, wash away the stains that have disfigured you, awaken within*

*you the slumbering sentiments and the covenant of our alliance, and go forth, Eldest Daughter of the Church, predestined nation, chosen vessel, to carry, as in the past, my name before all peoples and kings of the earth."*

## Citations

- **Pope John Paul II, June 1, 1980, Homily at Le Bourget:**  
*"France, Eldest Daughter of the Church, are you faithful to the promises of your Baptism? Permit me to ask: France, Eldest Daughter of the Church and educator of peoples, are you faithful, for the good of humanity, to the covenant with eternal wisdom? Forgive me this question. I ask it as the minister does at the moment of baptism. I ask it out of concern for the Church, of which I am the chief priest and servant, and out of love for humanity, whose ultimate greatness lies in God—Father, Son, and Spirit."*
- **Pius IX, *Quanta Cura*, 1864:**  
*"The principle is impious and absurd that society must be governed as if religion did not exist or, at least, without making any distinction between the true religion and false religions."*
- **Saint Pius X, *Vehementer Nos*, 1906:**  
*"This thesis of the separation of Church and State is a clear denial of the supernatural order. It limits the State's action to the pursuit of public prosperity in this life, which is only the proximate reason for political societies. It takes no account whatsoever of the ultimate reason, which is the eternal beatitude offered to man when this brief life comes to an end. Yet the present order of things, unfolding in time, is subordinated to the attainment of this supreme and absolute good. Civil authority must not only avoid hindering this attainment but must actively assist in it."*
- **Pius XI, *Maximam Gravissimamque*, 1924:**  
*"Whenever by 'secularism' is meant an attitude or intention contrary or hostile to God and religion, we entirely disapprove of this 'secularism' and declare outright that it must be rejected."*
- **Leo XIII, *Immortale Dei*:**  
*"To claim that the State must remain entirely indifferent to religion and can govern public affairs without any reference to God is an audacity without precedent, even among pagans. They carried so deeply inscribed in their souls not only a vague idea of the gods but also the social necessity of religion, that for them it would have been easier to imagine a city standing without a foundation than a city deprived of God."*
- **Benedict XVI, Address to the Italian Catholic Jurists, December 9, 2006:**  
*"The term 'secularity' has been given an ideological interpretation contrary to its original meaning... Today, secularity is commonly understood as the exclusion of religion from various spheres of society, restricting it to the domain of individual conscience... At the root of this conception is an areligious vision of life, thought, and morality—a vision that leaves no room for God, for a transcendent Mystery, or for an absolute moral law valid in all times and circumstances."*