

Thematic meditations

SUNDAY



THAT HE MAY REIGN

ON EARTH AS IN HAEVEN

43^e Pèlerinage de Pentecôte
de Paris à Notre-Dame de Chartres

7, 8 et 9 juin 2025



Personal Conversion of the Witnesses of Christ

MEDITATION 5

Dear Pilgrim,

After Saint Benedict, who gave us a rule of life, let us now consider how to live by it and achieve our personal conversion. Indeed, what is the point of wanting to change the world if we do not first begin by changing ourselves?

Christendom: A Spring of Holiness

But perhaps you are thinking, “This year’s theme is about Christendom, the involvement of laypeople for the good of the city, action in the service of Christ the King... Why are you speaking here about personal holiness?”



Vitrail représentant saint Martin de Tours (cathédrale de Bourges)

Because, dear pilgrims, we must not forget a fundamental truth: it is impossible for Christ to reign in our societies without saints to establish His reign. As Pope John Paul II said:

"Do not fall into the error of believing that society can be changed simply by altering external structures or by focusing primarily on satisfying material needs. One must begin by changing oneself, by sincerely turning one's heart toward the living God, by renewing oneself morally, by uprooting sin and selfishness from one's own heart. A transformed person contributes effectively to the transformation of society. »

The Christianization of Society Springs from the Holiness of Christians

If we truly lived the Gospel deeply, this theological life within us would overflow into all our works—our labor, our roles as fathers and mothers, our involvement in society. It is the saints who transform society!

If we were more closely united to Jesus Christ, we would find it increasingly intolerable to see Him ignored or scorned in the world. Let us examine ourselves: perhaps the lack of interest we feel for the social reign of Jesus Christ stems from the fact that He does not fully reign within us, in our hearts, and that a conversion is necessary.

If we Christians were more passionate about Christ, we would be the lights of the world, the salt of the earth that the Gospel speaks of. The world is in darkness, tasteless and bland. It is up to us to bring a bit of light into this world, a pinch of salt! That is why we must avoid hiding our light or allowing our salt to lose its flavor.

The Necessity of Conversion

In 1969, Pope Benedict XVI, then Cardinal Ratzinger, made what now feels like a prophetic statement on German radio:

"I think, no, I am certain, that the Church's future will come from those whose lives are deeply rooted in faith, who live it purely and completely. It will not come from those who adapt to the passing moment without reflection, nor from those who merely criticize, presuming themselves to be infallible benchmarks. Nor will it come from those who take the path of least resistance, seeking to escape the passion of faith, dismissing anything demanding, painful, or sacrificial as false, outdated, tyrannical, or legalistic. No: the Church's future, as always, will be reshaped by saints."

This underscores the vital necessity for each of us to pursue a profound, radical, and ongoing conversion. Of course, for someone steeped in grave sin, this seems obvious. But what does it mean for a "normal" Christian—one who loves God, strives to do His will, yet struggles with weaknesses and failures?

Saint Augustine explains that every serious sin is fundamentally a turning away from God and His infinite goodness, to turn toward a creature: *"aversio a Deo, conversio ad creaturam"* (a turning away from God, a turning toward a creature). Therefore, if sin is a turning away from God, as though we veer off the marked path, then we must constantly turn back toward God. This is the primary meaning of the word *conversion*. To convert is to change sides, to come back to God's side.

Conversion is a Challenge

The problem is that God's side is not necessarily the most comfortable side. To stand with God is challenging, difficult, and demanding. Jesus was not born in a palace, and He does not promise us an easy life.

This is the radical nature of the Gospel:

"If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it."

This demanding path is also the path to true happiness and genuine freedom, as Saint Paul reminds us:

"I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us."

Yes, it is challenging, but how beautiful it is!

So, Practically Speaking, What Should We Do?

Establishing a Rule of Life

One of the most effective ways to change is to impose changes on oneself. An active Christian, determined to pursue salvation, does not passively wait for events or old age to nudge them toward conversion. Instead, they take initiative. This is the purpose of a *rule of life*: a freely chosen framework to organize one's life according to what truly matters.

Key Conditions for a Good Rule of Life

1. **It must spring from love:** A good rule of life stems from the realization that only a life with Christ is worth living. In this way, it does not become a burden but a reflection of our preference and an authentic desire to live as God calls us to live.
2. **It must be personal:** Tailored specifically to each individual. Don't aim too high right away, or you risk abandoning it after the first day! Seek guidance from a priest if necessary.
3. **It must be precise:** Avoid vague resolutions like, "I resolve to become a saint!" Instead, set specific and concrete objectives.
4. **It must be balanced,** addressing the four main aspects of our lives: our interior life through prayer; our intellectual growth through study; our will through spiritual combat; and our attention to our duties of state.

First Step: Nourishing Your Spiritual Life

A strong and regular spiritual life is essential—not just for three days during a pilgrimage, but every day of the year. While the spiritual life is ultimately a gift from God, our daily fidelity creates fertile ground for that gift to grow.

Practical Suggestions for a Stronger Spiritual Life

- Commit to **morning and evening prayers**.
- Dedicate time to **mental prayer (or oraison)** daily.
- Pray the **rosary every day**.
- Make a **monthly confession**.
- Attend **Mass once a week** in addition to Sunday Mass.
- Plan a **retreat at a monastery** before the end of the year.
- Spend time in **adoration of the Blessed Sacrament** at least once a month.

As we grow in our spiritual lives, we will become more fervent. Jesus said:

"I have come to set the earth on fire, and how I wish it were already blazing!"

May this fire burn within us and spread to the world!

Second Point: Educating Your Mind

I need to educate my mind. How many Christians, whether 20, 30, or 50 years old, are still relying on the catechism classes they took to prepare for their First Communion? So many people abandon the faith and religious practice because they simply don't know their faith. If, at 50 years old, I have a question about faith and my only answer is a vague childhood memory, I might end up lumping Jesus together with the "tooth fairy," "Santa Claus," or "Easter bells"—harmless tales for children but ones that offer no answers to my adult concerns.

We also need to be honest with ourselves. Considering all the time we waste on trivial things, it's hard to believe we can't find the time to read one or two books a year! Between two lightweight novels or hours spent on YouTube, surely it's possible to read a saint's biography or a book that genuinely teaches us something about God. Dedicate just ten minutes every evening to reading a good book, and in a month, you'll have finished an entire one! (Refer to the recommended reading list at the end of this booklet.)

Practical Suggestions for Educating Your Mind

- Enroll in a **Christian formation group** near your home starting in September.
- Attend a **summer university for Christian formation** this summer.
- Buy a book from the **bibliography** and read it over the summer.

Third Point: Strengthening Your Will Through Spiritual Combat

We must form our nature. As the saying goes, grace does not destroy nature, nor does it replace it, but rather it builds upon it and elevates it. I can't simply pray to God; I must also act and make real efforts. Listen to what St. Paul says on the subject:

"Do you not know that in a race all the runners compete, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable crown, but we an imperishable one."

Practical Suggestions for Spiritual Combat

- **Organize your days:** Get up early in the morning, go to bed at a consistent time, and ensure you get enough sleep.
- **Maintain a healthy lifestyle:** A sound mind in a sound body. Exercise regularly, and tackle any addictions (e.g., tobacco, sugar, junk food, alcohol, smartphone dependency, pornography).
- **Master your relationship with technology:** Don't be enslaved by technological tools. Learn to disconnect from your phone and screens, and cultivate simplicity in your daily life.
- **Identify frequent occasions of sin** in your life and eliminate them radically.
- **Rediscover penance and mortification:** Small voluntary sacrifices strengthen our souls and prepare us for greater challenges.
- **Live an exemplary life:** The credibility of our ideals depends on our example. It is crucial to live up to the ideals we promote—this includes marital fidelity, avoiding gossip, practicing honesty and morality, and maintaining a strong spiritual life.

Fourth Point: Duties of State

Finally, let us remember that the holiness God wants for us is not abstract but is built through the faithful fulfillment of our duties of state. It is in this fidelity to our duty of state that our sanctity is

built. But our duty of state also includes our duty as Christians in the world. Therefore, our rule of life must necessarily include missionary activity suited to each person's circumstances.

Practical Suggestions for Fulfilling Duties of State

- **If you are married:** Your role as a spouse and parent is your primary duty of state. Be faithful to the promises of marriage. Dedicate time to your family and your spouse. Spend sufficient time on your children's education; do not delegate this entirely to school or scouting organizations. Pray with your children, set a good example for them, talk with them, and play with them.
- **Reflect on your profession:** Is your work aligned with your faith? Do you act as a Christian in your job or studies?
- **Take on a commitment to serve the Church, evangelization, or the common good:** Dedicate your time and resources to noble causes, such as associations, youth groups, schools, parishes, or movements.

Conclusion

We need men and women capable of committing themselves to the common good. To achieve this, they must be morally strong and spiritually driven. How many have lost their way in their commitments because they lacked formation, virtue, or spiritual life?

It's time to move past activism that thinks it can thrive without formation! Time to say goodbye to Catholic gatherings where people are drunk by 10:30 p.m. Instead, let's embrace dignity! Away with pornography and deviant sexual practices—let's choose purity! Enough with timid or overly provocative speeches—let's embrace truth! No more shameful compromises—let's pursue true prudence!

We need saints—not perfect individuals, for only God is perfect—but men and women striving for the good, aware of their fragility, and steadfastly devoted to Christ the King through prayer and the sacraments, confident that He can make them into saints, the saints the world desperately needs. And this is possible!

So, let us take advantage of this Pentecost Mass to reflect on ourselves and begin this return of our souls to God.