

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



ISLANDS OF CHRISTIANITY OPEN TO THE WORLD

MEDITATION 6



Dear pilgrims,

Sunday afternoons on the road to Chartres are never easy. There is, of course, the physical challenge: already fifty kilometers covered, heavy legs, and aching feet. But there is also the mental challenge. Yesterday morning's departure from Paris is now just a memory, and tomorrow's arrival at Our Lady of Chartres is not yet a reality. We find ourselves in an "in-between," far from the noise of the cities and the world—and that is a blessing.

After reflecting this morning on the personal work we can do on ourselves to grow in holiness, and before discussing tomorrow the commitments we can take to radiate Christ in the world, there is an intermediate step that must not be overlooked: creating oases, islands of Christianity that, God willing, will tomorrow become beacons of Christ's love shining upon the world. This is what we will discuss now.

MAIN IDEAS

- Establishing micro-Christian communities to transmit the faith.
- Creating a “climate,” a “Christian friendship.”
- Learning how to protect oneself from the world without separating entirely from it.

INTRODUCTION

“You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead, they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”

This well-known Gospel passage follows immediately after the Beatitudes. Our Lord, after speaking about our personal holiness, now tells us our role in relation to the world. He commands us to do two things: first, to remain full of flavor and purpose and not lose our “saltiness,” and second, to illuminate the world.

Thus, we will first reflect on how to protect the divine life within us and then consider how to bring it to the world.

But first, let us remember a few essential points:

- Humanity is created to live in society and is, therefore, necessarily influenced by the society in which it lives.
- However, we live in a society that has forgotten God and rejects Him.
- Yet, our central mission remains the salvation of souls: ours, of course, but also those of others. The Christian is, by nature, a missionary. How can we best fulfill this mission?
- Our old Europe has been de-Christianized, and the clergy is increasingly scarce. Thus, it is more and more up to us, the laity, to choose our means of sanctification, make strong decisions, preserve this treasure, and work toward Christ’s reign.

PROTECTING THE DIVINE LIFE WITHIN US

We are the salt of the earth, and the first duty of salt is to remain salty. We are the light of the world, and to shine, we must protect the flame kindled in us by divine grace on the day of our baptism. We must nurture it with care and guard it from anything that could extinguish it—especially in youth, when the flame of faith is still being formed.

Since the beginning of our pilgrimage, we have emphasized that Christianity is essential for creating a climate around the soul that is conducive to holiness, supporting its journey toward Heaven (without idealizing Christianity as a paradise on earth). Since this favorable climate no longer exists on a societal scale, it is both natural and essential to strive to recreate this Christian spirit on smaller, more focused levels. We need to build citadels—safe places where the devil and the world will have the least influence.

Let us listen to Benedict XVI, for this is an idea very dear to him:

"We need islands where faith in God and the internal simplicity of Christianity live and radiate; oases, Noah's arks where man can always find refuge. These spaces of protection are the spaces of the liturgy. Beyond that, even in various movements and communities, in parishes, in sacramental celebrations, in devotions, and in pilgrimages, the Church seeks to provide sources of resistance and to develop zones of protection where the beauty of the world, the beauty of existence, becomes visible again in contrast to all that is broken around us."

What Are These Oases?

The family, the school, and the parish are the first and foremost oases. They must become sanctuaries fully dedicated to the Kingdom of God—places where Christ truly reigns, and where the primacy of the spiritual over the temporal is respected by all.

The Family

The family, as the fundamental unit of society and a sanctuary of domestic virtues, is the most perfect earthly reflection of the Holy Trinity. It is the place, par excellence, that must be protected from evil because it is where souls are born and grow. A Catholic family must ensure that its home is a place where God is present and honored.

Concrete Ideas for the Family:

- **Sanctify Sundays** and prioritize family prayer, where children see their parents praying. This is the greatest proof of God's existence for them!
- **Enthroned the Sacred Heart** in your home (see tomorrow's meditation for more details).
- **Ensure the morality of leisure activities.**
- **Reflect critically on the use of the internet and screens**, and commit to living counter-culturally in a world dragging the youth into a torrent of immorality.

Dear parents, you cannot remain blind or naive about the dangers of pornography, cyberbullying, addiction, and social media. Giving your child unsupervised and unrestricted internet access is tantamount to giving them poison to drink. (See the pilgrim booklet for more on internet filters).

The Parish

In the past, people naturally attended their local parish. However, given the crises affecting both the world and the Church today, it is necessary to make intentional choices. For example, we can no longer separate our professional or personal decisions (such as changing jobs, choosing a city for studies, or buying a house) from our vital spiritual needs, such as finding a suitable parish or school. We must learn to make sacrifices for the salvation of our souls and the souls of our children.

Choose a parish that aligns with the education you provide at home, one that offers a rich and frequent sacramental life, regular and high-quality adult formation, a solid catechism program, and a community of friends who will help you progress toward Heaven together.

The School

Still prioritizing the salvation of the soul, parents must carefully consider their choice of school for their children. After all, what parent would stop feeding their child? Similarly, nourishing the intellect and the heart with an authentically Catholic education is just as important as providing physical nourishment.

For the past forty years, an increasing number of families have chosen independent Catholic schools to protect their children's faith and intellect. The success of these schools and the benefits to the children are evident. These schools pass on the heritage of Christianity across multiple generations, as the likelihood of successfully transmitting the faith increases in an authentically Christian environment.

Heed the Words of Pope Pius XI

Parents, listen to the warning Pope Pius XI gave 100 years ago regarding education, particularly for children at an age when their faith is being formed and they are especially vulnerable to harmful influences:

"It is essential that not only is religion taught to young people at certain hours, but that the entirety of their education be imbued with Christian piety. Without this sacred breath, which must permeate and warm the spirit of both teachers and students, science, no matter how advanced, will be of little benefit. [...] The attendance of non-Catholic, neutral, or mixed schools (those open indiscriminately to Catholics and non-Catholics alike) must be prohibited for Catholic children."

If Pope Pius XI was so strict nearly a century ago, what would he say about today's schools?

A Vital Decision for Parents

Dear parents, engaged couples, or young people called to marriage, do not dismiss this crucial question with a smile when making professional choices, deciding where to move, or managing your finances. You have—or will have—souls entrusted to your care before God. Keep in mind that many forms of financial assistance are available for those who face difficulties. This is a matter of moral and intellectual survival.

Preserving the faith requires a willingness to be different from the world. It means accepting the need to separate from certain aspects or places within it.

"Structures of Sin"

This is the theme that St. John Paul II developed when he spoke of "structures of sin."

"Except in cases of extraordinary vocation, it is necessary today to apply to certain human organizations what Don Bosco advised his young people to do regarding certain individuals: 'Flee if you want to be victorious,'" said John Paul II, quoting St. Augustine. "Even at the cost of dissidence and reproach."

Being in the World Without Being of the World

Dear pilgrims, it is important to clarify two essential points here:

1. **Do not expect from these micro-societies what they cannot provide:** a tranquil and perfect paradise. Nothing will be perfect—far from it—because wherever humans exist on this earth, there is sin and imperfection, as long as we are here. Do not idealize Christendom, or you will be deeply disappointed.
2. **The second point is closely related:** These spiritual oases are not built for the sake of living peacefully, isolated from the world in absolute safety. They are created to **form the apostles of tomorrow**. Missionaries understand this well: they need "centers" where they can be trained, acquire knowledge, and build spiritual strength before heading out to evangelize. And you won't need to go far—**the mission fields are right at your doorstep, outside your home!**

These fortresses are the places where the mission begins. For while the Kingdom of God is not of this world, it is indeed within this world: *"No one lights a lamp and puts it under a bushel basket."*

Christians are not formed to be left sitting safely on a shelf. It is our responsibility to leave these fortresses to proclaim the Kingdom of God. We are its heralds, called to conquer new subjects for Christ and to transmit the divine light that has been given to us.

Thus, these islands of Christendom, rooted and countercultural, are not timid retreats into ourselves. On the contrary, they are the **beating heart of the mission**. The goal is not to flee the world, to seek only Catholic employers, or to live exclusively among Christians. Quite the opposite! There is a time to protect oneself and a time to fulfill one's mission on earth, like a fledgling bird that stays in its comfortable nest but eventually, strengthened by the food given by its parents, takes flight!

On the other hand, withdrawing entirely from the world or promoting exclusively Catholic communities that neglect their brothers and the welfare of the temporal city risks falling into the sin of pride, bitter zeal, and a lack of charity. Only monks live entirely separated from the world; they have a particular role and vocation that laypeople do not share. **We are social beings, called to live in society, to contribute to the world with the fruits of our talents and the graces we have received.**

The Example of the Early Christians

The example of the first Christians is illuminating: they lived in community but not in isolation. There was no parallel economy or withdrawal from civic duties. Some were soldiers, others farmers, and so on. They radiated goodness and drew others to Christ through the power of their virtuous example.

Living in community means supporting one another, gathering together, and loving one another with charity and a sense of preferential care—but **not living apart from the world**.

Larger Oases

We have spoken about the family, the school, and the parish. But we must think bigger! Christian friendships go beyond these confines, and it is up to you, dear pilgrims, to be creative in starting to weave this Christian social fabric, which will be the beginning of a new Christendom. Listen once more to Benedict XVI:

"Given that there exists a hedonistic culture that seeks to prevent us from living according to the Creator's design, we must have the courage to create islands, oases, and then large fields of Catholic culture, where we can live according to the Creator's plans."

Some Practical Ideas:

- **The large family of scouting**, for example, or youth formation camps that foster lifelong friendships (e.g., St. Lazare, Missio, Ste. Madeleine), summer universities, and so on.
- **Developing associations**: There are endless possibilities to start new projects or even to redirect or reorient existing associations in the right direction (e.g., AFC, AMAP, associations for heritage preservation, associations for popular culture).
- **Networking**: Professional networks or those of engaged actors are essential for getting to know one another and creating synergies. Don't isolate yourself.
- **Retreats, family friendship groups**, like *Domus Christiani* or *Cana groups*, and all those educational, cultural, or civic activities developed by Catholics, countercultural yet attractive, creating spaces that generate witnesses and missionaries. And if there's nothing nearby, here's one piece of advice: **create it! Be inventive!**

Community Strength for the Spiritual Battle

Do you see? **We cannot be Christian on our own.** It is essential to regularly drink from the fountain of living water, to immerse ourselves in an authentically Christian atmosphere, so we can regain strength in truly Christian friendships for the spiritual battle we face in an atheistic world. How many of us look forward to these three days of walking to Chartres precisely because they are three days of renewal that will invigorate our family life, our parish, and our work afterward?

Conclusion: Toward Political Engagement

If you have understood the spirit of these Christian oases, you will naturally see that they do not oppose Christian engagement in the service of the temporal city, or **"politics" in the noble sense of the word**. A Catholic cannot remain indifferent to politics, to laws, to cultural or moral battles aimed at improving society. Do we not sing at the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple, on February 2, *"Lumen ad revelationem gentium"*? Christ is the light that must illuminate not only Christians, not only associations of Christians, but entire nations.

It is the entire nation—with its leaders, its institutions, its government, its politics, its schools, its culture—that must be brought into Christ's kingdom. Then the words of the Gospel will be fulfilled:

"Let your light shine before men, so that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."

That is what we will explore tomorrow.

Quotations

"From this necessary vigilance, it does not follow that youth must separate itself from the society in which it must live and achieve its salvation. (...) Let our young people, like the true Christians of all times, be, as Tertullian demanded of the first faithful, 'participants in the world, but not in its errors.'"

—Pope Pius XI, *Divini illius magistri*, on the Christian education of youth (1929)

"In the encroaching barbaric night, Saint Clotilde, secluded in her house in Tours, and Saint Radegund, behind the cloister of the monastery in Poitiers, kept their lamps burning—the lamp of prayer and good works, both spiritual and temporal. They maintained against barbarism a few bastions of prayer, honor, and culture, because their souls were fixed on God. Are we called to do anything else? And would grace not be granted to us to accomplish this? It is impossible that grace would not be given to us."

—Père Calmel, *Nous sommes fils de saints* (Chapter on Saint Clotilde)

"Should we withdraw to the desert when we see how much our freedom to serve the Church and defend honest institutions is shrinking? (...) In such circumstances, we can withdraw to the desert if that is our vocation. But we must continue our service, however limited it may be, if our vocation is not that of hermits. Saint Veronica did not lock herself in her cell when the furious, the deceitful, and the cowardly moved toward consummating iniquity; she slipped through the crowd and the soldiers to reach the Lord, and she wiped the divine face. That may be the only gesture a Christian can accomplish during certain periods of history. Let him accomplish it rather than dream of withdrawing to the desert when his vocation is to advance boldly and bear witness."

—Père Calmel, *Que votre Règne arrive*, p. 164

"Let us believe in the Lord's firm words: 'My sheep, no one will snatch them from my hand.' (..) Let us remember the promises of the Apocalypse. (...) However limited our means and diabolical the opposition, we will not capitulate to the Beast, nor will we despair of restoring a Christian France. Each of us at our post, and according to the particular laws of our mission—soldiers, teachers, farmers, magistrates, small employees in a Babylonian company, or priests responsible for a small flock that may be timid, panicked, or disoriented—we will strive to promote the Christian renewal of France and a civilization not unworthy of Christ the King."

—Père Calmel, *Que votre Règne arrive*, p. 132