



In September, the Church celebrates Our Lady of Seven Sorrows, who suffered so much during the Passion of her Son. So, for this ninth^{1st} Saturday of the Jubilee month, we will meditate on one of the sorrowful mysteries: the crowning with thorns. What is the meaning of this terrible passage of the Passion? The head is first of all the seat of thoughts, and here Jesus is going to repair all our sins *in thought*. They take many forms. The first, the true root of all evil, is pride. It is at the origin of Lucifer's rebellion and of original sin. Today, pride has penetrated modern society and we are all more or less responsible for it. Jesus, through His painful crown, came to repair this great insult to God.

Sins of the mind are also those invisible sins that Christ spoke of in the Gospel. Using adultery as an example, he showed that we can commit many sins simply by desiring them in our minds, without acting on them. And this is just as serious in the eyes of God. Indeed, every sin is first and foremost a free and voluntary decision of our mind. And Jesus explained to us that it is this decision accepted in our minds that characterizes the offense against God. Silence, the absence of visible acts, etc., do not detract from the reality of this rejection of God by our thoughts.

That is why all spiritual life requires us to work to strengthen our spirit. This is the fruit of this mystery. To this end, the first means that all saints have used is humility and consideration of our own weakness. *"All the perfection of this present life consists in recognizing one's imperfections,"* said St. Jerome. *"Our strength lies in the knowledge of our weakness and in the humble acknowledgment of our misery,"* said Saint Augustine. Indeed, by placing our minds in these conditions, we are rightly wary of ourselves, and we understand the necessity of prayer and the sacraments to sustain us in the face of our human weakness. Saint Philip Neri prayed every day to God to watch over him: *"Lord, watch over me today, for left to myself, I am sure to offend you."* And Saint Alphonsus Liguori concluded: *"To persevere in the good, we must not rely on the resolutions we have made or the promises we have made to God. As soon as we rely on our own strength, we are lost. It is in the merits of Jesus Christ that we must place all our hope to remain in a state of grace."* So today, let us look at Jesus crowned with thorns and humbly ask him to help us in this necessary mastery of our minds.

The second way is to prepare our minds before temptation even arises through prayer and penance. Saint Alphonsus Liguori explains the benefits of such preparation: *"It is very useful, in order to triumph in spiritual battles, to anticipate them in our meditations, disposing ourselves in advance to resist with all our strength the attacks that may surprise us."* Indeed, training ourselves to refuse temptation beforehand is much easier than when its seduction is already present, and it allows us to gradually strengthen our will. This is why Jesus asks us in the *Our Father* to pray for the strength to resist future temptations. And in the *Hail Mary*, we anticipate the final temptation by asking every day for the help of the Blessed Virgin at the hour of our death, help which she will make even more powerful with the five^{1st} Saturdays of the month.

After the reparation for sins of the mind, the crowning with thorns has a second very powerful meaning. Without knowing it, the executioners are here bearing witness to the kingship of Jesus. Pilate will also do this later on the sign above the cross: *"Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews."* Finally, it is Jesus himself who will affirm this during his interrogation: *"You say that I am a king. (Jn 18:37)."* And before his Ascension, Jesus will proclaim this Kingship in the true sense of the word: *"All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations. (Mt 28:18)"*

A famous cardinal of the 19th century, Cardinal Pie, made this insightful remark about Jesus' words: *"Notice, my brothers, that Jesus Christ does not say all men, all individuals, all families, but all nations."* The fact that Jesus Christ is not only the King of our hearts and families, but also **the King of all nations**,

that is, of all societies, is a reality taught by the popes. And it is one of the most contested points of modern times, because it is essential. Pope Leo XIII explained it very clearly: *"He who is the Creator and also the Redeemer of human nature, the Son of God, is the King and master of the universe and has sovereign power over men, **whether taken individually or gathered together in society.** The law of Christ must therefore have such value that it serves to direct and govern not only private life, **but also public life.**"* Encyclical *De Christo Redemptore*, 1900.

Following in his footsteps, Pope Pius XI published the encyclical *Quas Primas* on December 11, 1925, in which the feast of Christ the King was instituted. This year we celebrate the 100th anniversary of this fundamental encyclical: *"It is clear that the name and power of King must be attributed, **in the proper sense of the word,** to Christ in his humanity; for it is only of Christ as man that we can say: He has received from the Father power, honor, and kingship; as the Word of God, consubstantial with the Father, he cannot fail to have everything in common with the Father and, consequently, supreme and absolute sovereignty over creatures."* Pope Pius XI then recalls the words of the angel Gabriel attesting to this kingship: *"Let us recall only the message of the archangel announcing to the Virgin that she would bear a Son, that to this Son the Lord God would give the throne of David his father, that he **would reign** forever over the house of Jacob, and that **his kingdom** would have no end."*

Finally, Pope Pius XI concludes: *"His Royalty [of Christ, editor's note] requires that **the entire State be governed by the commandments of God and Christian principles, both in its legislation and in the administration of justice, and in the education of youth in sound doctrine and good morals.**"* And this is precisely what Satan is bent on destroying. Indeed, a Christian society whose government and laws conform to divine laws provides a powerful earthly framework to help souls go to Heaven. On the other hand, a secular atheistic society, cut off from God, allows its laws to pervert men, separate them from God, and lead them to Hell. Pius XI called this secularism *"the plague of our time,"* and Cardinal Pius said: *"The dominant error, the capital crime of this century, is the claim to remove public society from the government and law of God."* This is the famous "separation of Church and State," a sophism which in reality means **eliminating God from society**. Is this not the very definition of Hell? A place cut off from God.

This then leads to multiple evils, and man is gradually crushed by this atheistic society. Pope Benedict XV said during World War¹: *"It is legal atheism, established as a system of civilization, that has plunged the world into a deluge of blood."* Yes, wars, genocides, persecutions, violence, social struggles, totalitarianism, are nothing more and nothing less than the direct consequence of having removed our societies from the power and law of Christ the King.

So what should we do? Pius XI answered this question: *"If we want to work most effectively for the restoration of peace, **let us restore the reign of Christ.** There can be no peace of Christ without the reign of Christ. And he continued: "The day when states and governments make it their sacred duty to regulate their political life, both internally and externally, according to the teachings and precepts of Jesus Christ, then, and only then, will they enjoy a **beneficial peace**, maintain relations of mutual trust, and resolve peacefully any conflicts that may arise. "* Encyclical *Urbi Arcano Dei Consilio*, 1922. These words of the pope are not utopian. Certainly, on the human level, it seems impossible to restore the situation. But Our Lady is there for just that!

Have we noticed this incredibly symbolic fact? On December 10, 1925, the Blessed Virgin came to ask for the ^{first}Saturdays of the month to obtain peace. The next day, December 11, 1925, Pope Pius XI published his encyclical on the social kingship of Our Lord. The message is clear: peace in the world depends on the return of Christ's reign in our countries. And this return will come through Our Lady of Fatima when we have obeyed her request for the first Saturdays.

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Note: Below is a short additional note on the kingdom of Christ.

Note on Jesus' words in the Gospel concerning his kingdom

Two phrases from the Gospel concerning the Kingdom of Our Lord are often misinterpreted, and it is necessary to shed some additional light on them outside of meditation.

1/ "Render to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's."

This phrase is sometimes perceived as indicating a separation between the State (Caesar) and God. Let us see how to understand it in the light of the Church's teaching. Every human being is both a temporal being living on earth and a spiritual being destined for Heaven. Here below, therefore, he will be subject to two distinct types of authority: the State and the Church. The state's goal is to ensure the physical and moral well-being of all its citizens; to do this, it must implement laws in many areas, including the moral sphere, as Pope John XXIII explains: *"The 'common good' that the state has to defend includes all the conditions, including moral and spiritual conditions, that help man to attain his ultimate goal, which is paradise."* *Pacem in Terris*.

The Church, *"for its part, is a society distinct from the State, 'perfect' in the sense that it has everything in itself to fulfill its mission, which is to lead souls to Heaven."* Leo XIII, *Immortale Dei*. The Church alone is therefore entrusted with the task of dispensing God's grace through the sacraments and teaching faith and morals. The Church is therefore **the** general moral reference point for both private and public life.

It follows that the State is indeed **independent of the Church** in order to ensure the just organization of society (rendering to Caesar what is Caesar's) and that, on the other hand, **the teaching of the Church is its reference point** for spiritual and moral matters (rendering to God what is God's). The Church and the State are therefore neither "merged" nor "separate" but **"distinct"** in their functions. Both contribute together, in mutual respect and genuine collaboration, to establishing a favorable framework on earth to help *"man achieve his ultimate goal, which is paradise."*

2/ "My kingdom is not of this world."



Crowned monstrance of Vatican

This sentence is often understood to mean that Christ is not the King of Nations on earth. Here again, let us look at this in the light of the Church's teaching. God is an eternal spirit who made heaven and earth. His Kingdom is therefore spiritual and material, eternal, pre-existing the earth, and completely transcending the limits of our visible world, whether in its essence, in space, or in time. Consequently, His infinite Kingdom cannot come from this small, finite world of ours. But this does not mean that our world, which He created entirely, is not an integral part of His global Kingdom—quite the contrary.

Far from "excluding" our world from His Kingdom, Christ solemnly affirms His earthly kingship: *"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations. (Mt 28:18)"*

3/ In conclusion

Let us consider a third sentence of Christ when He addresses Pontius Pilate: *"You would have no power if it were not given to you from above. (Jn 19:11)."* What does this mean? Christ guides men and exercises His power on earth indirectly by delegating it to human leaders. He will entrust spiritual power to the popes and temporal power to heads of state, and He explains here that this power comes from God (and not from the people). Consequently, and as in any principle of delegation, the "delegates" must exercise their power in submission to the One who delegates it to them. This is true for both the Church and the State.