



After the scourging, in which Jesus made reparation more specifically for our sins of the flesh, comes the crowning with thorns. The head is the seat of thoughts, and through these thorns that pierce it, Jesus makes reparation here for our sins of the spirit. These sins all have their root in pride, and contemplating the crowning with thorns will help us combat this sin and, instead, cultivate humility.



To achieve this, the first means that all the saints have employed is the consideration of one's own weakness. *“All the perfection of the present life consists in recognizing one's imperfections,”* Saint Jerome would say. Saint Philip Neri prayed to God every day to watch over him: *“Lord, watch over me today, for, left to myself, I am certain to offend You.”* Indeed, by placing our minds in this disposition, we rightly distrust ourselves, and we understand the necessity of being aided by prayer and the sacraments, which are absolutely necessary to overcome our human weakness.

And St. Alphonsus Liguori explains: *“To persevere in doing good, we must not rely on the resolutions we have made, nor on 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.”*

After becoming aware of our weakness, a second consideration is essential to protect us from pride: nothing comes from us. Everything comes from God and His grace. Do we have a quality? Good for us. It is merely a gift received from God. A gift, far from giving us any cause for pride, must lead us to great gratitude toward God and make us mindful of the responsibility it entails. This is the parable of the talents. This is why Saint Pius X was afraid of going to hell! Let us mention here a term that has been in vogue for some time: charisms. This word is a trap. It conveys in itself the notion of a personal quality without the notion of a “gift.” Inevitably, we quickly come to see ourselves as the authors of the “charism,” which inevitably leads to pride. We have no charisms. We have only gifts received from God.

After thus mastering our mind, we must then prepare it for Satan's attacks even before temptation arrives, for *the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak*. Saint Alphonsus Liguori explains the benefits of such preparatory work: *“It is very helpful, in order to triumph in spiritual battles, to anticipate them in our meditations, by **preparing ourselves in advance** to resist with all our strength the attacks that may take us by surprise.”* Indeed, training ourselves to refuse a temptation before we have even faced it is much easier to do than when its allure is already present. In this way, we gradually strengthen our will. This is why Jesus asks us in the *Lord's Prayer* to pray unceasingly to resist future temptations: *lead us not into temptation*. And in the *Hail Mary*, we ask each day for the help of the Blessed Virgin in anticipation of the great final temptation we will face at the hour of our death.

Finally, the crowning with thorns is not limited to atoning for our sins. It also atones for the terrible indifference of people who do not think of God, even though God thinks of them and loves them at every moment. How many whole days go by without us thinking of Him even once? Without paying Him the slightest visit at the tabernacle, where He is truly present. Yes, a terrible indifference that causes the Heart of Jesus so much suffering. This is the central point of the message of Paray-Le-Monial. *“This Heart that has loved mankind so much and receives only indifference...”* We are quick to take offense at insults and blasphemies against Christ. But do we take offense at our own indifference toward Him? He asked for the Holy Hour on Thursday evenings and Communion on ^{the First} Fridays at Paray-Le-Monial. Who cares about that? Throughout the day, a true Christian should think of God dozens of times: offering Him one's sufferings, thanking Him for one's joys, admiring Him in the beauty of nature, asking Him for guidance in one's decisions, entrusting a person in difficulty to Him, etc. And frequently lifting one's eyes to Him without reason, even for a second, just to praise Him. This is called spontaneous prayer.

Beyond our sins of the mind, the crown of thorns has a second, very important meaning. Indeed, in their attempt to mock Jesus, the executioners actually bear a testimony to His Kingship (1). This is what Pilate would also do later on the sign on the cross: *“Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews.”* Finally, it is Jesus Himself who affirms this during His interrogation: *“You say so; I am a king.” (Jn 18:37)*. And before his

Ascension, Jesus proclaimed this kingship in the true sense of the word: *"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of **all nations**. (Mt 28:18)"*

A famous^{19th}-century cardinal, Cardinal Pie, made this insightful remark regarding these words of Jesus: *"Notice, my brothers, that Jesus Christ does not say 'all men,' 'all individuals,' or 'all families,' but '**all nations**.' "* The fact that Jesus Christ is not only the King of our hearts and our 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, precisely because it is essential. Pope Leo XIII explained this with great clarity: *"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 possesses sovereign power over men, whether taken individually or **united 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 this, Pope Pius XI published the encyclical *Quas Primas* on December 11, 1925, in which the Feast of Christ the King was instituted: *"It is evident 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 one can say: He has received from the Father power, honor, and kingship; as the Word of God, consubstantial with the Father, He cannot but share 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, who attests to this Kingship: *"Let us recall only the message of the archangel informing 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** eternally over the house of Jacob and that **His reign** would have no end."*

Finally, Pope Pius XI concludes: *"His Kingship [Christ's, ed.] demands that **the entire State be governed by God's commandments** and Christian principles, both in legislation and in the administration of justice, as well as in the formation of youth in sound doctrine and good moral discipline. 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. Conversely, a secular, atheistic society, cut off from God, allows through its laws for the perversion of men, for their separation from God, and for their leading into Hell. Pius XI calls this secularism *"the plague of our time,"* and Cardinal Pie will say: *"The dominant error, the capital crime of this century, is the claim to remove public society from God's government and law."* This is the famous "separation of Church and State," a sophism that in reality means **eliminating God from society**. Is this not the very definition of Hell? A place cut off from God.*

From this follow many evils, and man is gradually crushed by this atheistic society. Pope Benedict XV said during World War^I: *"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 strife, and 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 wish 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 continues: *"The day when states and governments make it their sacred duty to govern themselves, in 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** within, maintain relations of mutual trust, and peacefully resolve any conflicts that may arise. "* Encyclical *Urbi Arcano Dei Consilio*, 1922. Today, humanly speaking, it is impossible to restore the reign of the crowned Christ. But Our Lady came to Fatima precisely for this reason!

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 and the salvation of the world. The next day, December 11, 1925, Pope Pius XI published his encyclical on the Social Kingship of Our Lord. It is She who, once we have obeyed Her requests at Fatima, will restore Christ to His kingship on earth.

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Additional Note on Jesus' words in the Gospel concerning His Kingdom

Two phrases from the Gospel concerning the Kingdom of Our Lord are often interpreted inaccurately, and it is appropriate to provide further clarification beyond 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, in the light of the Church's teaching, how to understand it. Every person is both a temporal being living on earth and a spiritual being destined for Heaven. Here on earth, they are therefore subject to two distinct types of authority: the State and the Church. The State's purpose is to ensure the physical and moral well-being of all its citizens; to this end, it must enact laws in many areas, including the moral sphere, as Pope John XXIII explains: *"The 'common good' that the State is called to defend includes all conditions—including moral and spiritual conditions—that help man 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 possesses within itself everything necessary to fulfill its mission, which is to lead souls to Heaven." Leo XIII, *Immortale Dei*. To the Church alone, therefore, is entrusted the task of dispensing God's grace through the sacraments and of teaching the faith and morals. The Church is thus **the** general moral reference point for both private and public life.

It follows that the State is indeed **independent of the Church** in ensuring the just material organization of society (rendering to Caesar what is Caesar's) and that, conversely, **the Church's teaching is its reference** for spiritual and moral matters (rendering to God what is God's). The Church and the State are therefore neither "merged" nor "separated" but **"distinct"** in their respective roles. Together, in mutual respect and genuine collaboration, they contribute to establishing a favorable framework on earth to help *"man attain his ultimate goal, which is paradise."*

2/ "My kingdom is not of this world"



Crowned Monstrance of the Vatican

This statement is often interpreted to mean that Christ is not the King of the Nations on earth. Here, too, let us consider this in light of the Church's teaching. God is an eternal Spirit who created heaven and earth. His Kingdom is therefore both spiritual and material, eternal, pre-existing the earth, and completely transcends 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 overall Kingdom—quite the contrary.

Far from "excluding" our world from His Kingdom, Christ, on the contrary, 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 statement by Christ when He addresses Pontius Pilate: *"You would have no authority at all unless it had been given to you from above. (John 19:11)"* What does this mean? Christ guides mankind and exercises His power on earth indirectly by delegating it to human leaders. He entrusts 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 while remaining subject to the One who delegates it to them. This applies equally to the Church and to the State.

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