This article first appeared in the October 2020 Print Edition of *Catholic Family News* (click HERE to subscribe; current subscribers can access the E-Edition HERE). See here for Part I, here for Part II, here for Part III, here for Part IV, here for Part V, and here for Part VI of this series.

This series of articles on Catholic Social Teaching has covered a lot of ground since April. The world, meanwhile, has seemed to wish to demonstrate once more the truth of sound principles by showcasing what happens in their notable absence. A presidential election approaches, in which the stakes are inconceivably high. Anthony Esolen thus recognizes the limitations of the choice before us, as well as the obviousness of what we must do:

> "It is no great praise to say of a political party that it is not given over to the demonically insane. But there it is. One party promises to persecute you if you speak against the demonic. The other party does not so promise. One party would trammel up the Church and gag her priests. The other party doesn't yet do so. And what of the people and their rotting homes? Nothing that lasts can be accomplished unless we build anew on solid foundations. Everything pragmatic must return to the principle."

Retracing Our Steps

In the first installment, I established that it is legitimate for the Church to teach on matters of social ethics in the political, economic, and cultural domains, because moral theology embraces all the free actions of men — actions that will be virtuous or vicious, leading individuals closer to or further away from their single ultimate end, the Beatific Vision, and leading societies closer to or further away from the supporting role they are supposed to play in this attainment of human perfection in Christ. We know, in any case, that the Church is permitted to teach on social ethics because she *has*, in fact, over many centuries exercised her Magisterium in precisely this way, and as Catholics we learn from the Magisterium, rather than telling it *a priori* what subjects it is or is not allowed to engage.

In the second installment, I examined the nature of any society as necessarily hierarchical, whether it be the family, the State, or the Church; and how the Christian understanding of equality, which did more to rid the world of slavery than anything else has ever done or could do, is at the same time incompatible with the egalitarianism characteristic of modernity. Classes are an inevitable part of civil society and are capable of working together for the common good. Since "liberty, fraternity, and equality" is the illusory mantra of modern political revolutions, the third column turned to the question of how true liberty,

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the freedom of the sons of God in truth to pursue excellence and happiness, differs from the licentiousness that leads to misery and nihilism. The relationship of law and liberty is not at all what moderns have been brainwashed into thinking. Good law in fact protects and nurtures the faculty of free will, guiding it along the path of proper growth to maturity, where one desires the good and freely embraces it. Since free will, in man's fallen condition, always brings evils in its wake, the problem of toleration of evil arises. We saw that the Church has a wise understanding of the balance between tolerating evils that cannot be readily eradicated and succumbing to a relativist mentality that refuses to condemn evils and work prudently towards their removal.

After these more political topics, the fourth and fifth installments delved into controversial economic questions that, after all, have profound political implications: the nature of private property in its relationship to the good of the family and the common good of the larger society, and the Church's repeated call for a more equitable distribution of the goods of creation, so that no one may suffer wretched want while another fattens himself off of excess — a situation too easily taken advantage of by Socialism and Communism. In particular, I tried to show how Distributism translates magisterial teaching into practical policies for gradually increasing private ownership without violent upheaval or the need for government ownership. It is true that dyed-in-the-wool Capitalists will never be convinced, but the effort to explain how there *are* real alternatives to plutocratic oligarchy is not in vain. Sooner or later, our decadent civilization will collapse and another must take its place. Perhaps Distributism will, at that time, find its place in the rebuilding of a Christian world on the scorched earth of postmodern atheism.

The sixth installment turned to a category broader than either politics or economics, namely, the cultural milieu out of which political regimes and economic practices emerge. Human beings are political animals who express their inner world in their outer actions, products, structures, and systems. Religious people, if they are true to their religion, will necessarily generate societies that are religious, and this includes governments and markets in their day-to-day operation. In other words, a Christian regime and a market that favors truly human goods over inhuman or anti-human "goods" is a natural outgrowth of the Faith truly believed and lived. The Catholic cultural synthesis that was European Christendom is the great evidence and exemplar of this process, but it can be seen throughout Western history at various times and in various places, even if on a more modest scale. It would be a form of despair for us to give way to discouragement in the face of the increasing hostility not only towards the Catholic Church but also towards the natural law and human reason, for we should see, with supernatural faith, that the more the truth is rejected, the more its enemies will suffer deformation and dissolution; and the more we ourselves live it and defend it, the more our sweat, and, if God wills it, our blood, will be the seed of a future

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Catholic culture out of which a confessional State may in due course arise. “Behold, the hand of the Lord is not shortened that it cannot save, neither is His ear heavy that it cannot hear” (Isa. 59:1).

Mounting the Summit

In this final article, we can step back and take the loftiest as well as the most comprehensive perspective on Catholic Social Teaching by turning to its starting point and goal, the Kingship of Christ. One of the truest, most-quoted, but, alas, least followed teachings of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) is that the Holy Eucharist is “the source and summit of the Christian life” — or, as other translations read, “font and apex” (*Lumen Gentium* §11). By means of an exact analogy, we may say that the Kingship of Christ is the source and summit of the family and of civil society, as well — and further, of *any* and *every* human society. Jesus Christ is the God-man from Whom all reality comes and to Whom all rational beings must return for judgment, resulting in either glorification or condemnation. He, as the eternal Word of God and Image of the Father, is the one “through Whom *all things* were made” (Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed) — including man’s social nature and all of its natural and supernatural consequences. As Pope Leo XIII teaches, the family as well as the civil order proceeds from God and stands beholden to Him no less than isolated individuals.

As we know, the preeminent magisterial source on the Kingship of Christ is the Encyclical of Pope Pius XI, *Quas Primas* (Dec. 11, 1925), which not only expounded the truth out of Scripture and Tradition but also introduced a feast in its honor, beloved to traditional Catholics for nearly a century:

> “Pius XI’s intention, as can be gleaned from n. 29, is to emphasize the glory of Christ as *terminus of His earthly mission,* a glory and mission *visible and perpetuated in history by the saints.* Hence the feast falls shortly before the Feast of All Saints, to emphasize that what Christ inaugurated in His own person before ascending in glory, the saints then instantiate and carry further in human society, culture, and nations. It is a feast primarily about celebrating Christ’s ongoing kingship over all reality, *including this present world,* where the Church must fight for the recognition of His rights, the actual extension of His dominion to *all domains, individual and social*.” (source)

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The Post-Conciliar Neutralizing of Christ the King

Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre (RIP), Michael Davies (RIP), Michael Foley, myself, and many other traditionalist authors have noted how radically Paul VI modified Pius XI's feast, in many ways neutralizing its significance. First, he moved it to the last Sunday of the year, giving it a cosmic and "end of the world" twist, as if to say: the Kingdom of Our Lord does not enter into and permeate history, as a leaven, but is postponed to the end, like a *Deus ex machina*. The working model is not King St. Louis IX or King St. Stephen of Hungary, but Teilhard de Chardin's Omega Point.

Secondly, Paul VI stripped away anything from the Mass or Divine Office of the day that had reference to the conversion of nations and their subjection to the Church. Again, as I discussed in the last installment, we are not speaking of theocracy, but of a correct ordering of Church and State whereby, as Leo XIII teaches, the former is to the latter as the soul is to the body, and, as Pius XII adds, where the former illuminates the meaning of the natural law so that the latter may translate it more successfully into civil law. Consider these verses of the hymn *Te saeculorum Principem*, written by V. Genovesi, S.J., in 1925:

> *Te nationum praesides*
> *Honore tollant publico,*
> *Colant magistri, judices,*
> *Leges et artes exprimant.*
>
> *Submissa regum fulgeant*
> *Tibi dicata insignia*
> *Mitique sceptro patriam*
> *Domosque subde civium.*

(The rulers of nations / extol You with public honor; governors and judges worship You, the laws and the arts make You known. May the obedient banners of kings be resplendent when dedicated to You; under Your mild scepter subdue the fatherland and citizens' homes.)

In verse 2, *Scelesta turba clamitat / Regnare Christum nolumus* (the wicked crowd cries out / "We want not Christ as king") connects the rejection of Christ's Kingship with the rejection, played out dramatically in front of Pontius Pilate, of His mission of salvation that culminates in the Cross and Resurrection; in verse 8, the second line *Qui sceptra mundi temperas* (Who govern the scepters of the world) reminds us that Christ is, right now, actually the Governor of the governors of the world, whether they acknowledge Him now or

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will be compelled to acknowledge Him in the life to come. These verses and lines reflect the older theological paradigm of Gregory XVI, Pius IX, Leo XIII, St. Pius X, Pius XI, and plenty of other popes to boot, which Vatican II ultimately rejected in *Dignitatis Humanae* (Declaration on Religious Liberty). So, when the *Liturgia Horarum* was published a few years later, verses 6 and 7 were just omitted, and the other verses cited were replaced with more "politically correct" material. It is a thoroughly disgraceful episode, among many others like it which can be found in the liturgical "reform".

As I have observed elsewhere on this subject:

> "There is common material, of course, between the new feast of the Consilium's devising and the original feast of Pius XI's institution, but it is by no means intended to be the same feast [merely] on a different Sunday…. It seems to me that the original feast of Christ the King represents the Catholic vision of society as a hierarchy in which lower is subordinated to higher, with the private sphere and the public sphere united in their acknowledgment of the rights of God and of His Church. This vision was put aside in 1969 to make way for a vision in which Christ is a king of my heart and a king of the cosmos—of the most micro level and the most macro level—but *not* king of anything in between: *not* king of culture, of society, of industry and trade, of education, of civil government."

It would be no exaggeration to say that if we reject the Kingship of Our Lord in regard to any detail of our personal and social lives — if we hold back any small piece and say "this domain is ours and ours alone; we'll have no king over it!" — we are already theoretically rejecting God; and this rejection, at first subtle and abstract, will soon enough lead to rejecting Him in the practical order, as well. God is one, and reality is one; there is no way to bifurcate life into what belongs to Him and what belongs to us.

> "The very first expression of the Kingship of Christ over man is found in the natural moral law that comes from God Himself; the highest expression of His Kingship is the sacred liturgy, where material elements and man's own heart are offered to God in union with the divine Sacrifice that redeems creation. Today, we are witnessing the auto-demolition of the Church on earth, certainly in the Western nations, as both the faithful and their shepherds run away and hide from the reality of the Kingship of Christ, which places such great demands on our fallen nature and yet promises such immense blessings in time and eternity. The relentless questioning of basic moral doctrine (especially in the area of marriage

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> and family), the continual watering down of theology and asceticism, the devastation of the liturgy itself — all these are so many rejections of the authority of God and of His Christ." (source)

Christ Must Once Again Be Hailed as King

We should be deeply grateful to Archbishop Viganò for calling our attention, once again, to the urgent need for Christ to be hailed once again as our King — first and foremost, *by the Church herself* (see here and here). For let us make no mistake about it: even if *Dignitatis Humanae* was intended to be a teaching about the modern secular State, it quickly became, by a kind of reflex effect, a teaching about the modernized and secularized Church. It was the Church, now, that could no longer confess Christ unambiguously as the one and only Savior of mankind; it was the Church that was not permitted to go forth to convert Jews, Muslims, Protestants, or pagans; it was the Church that needed to bend the knee, not before the King of kings, but before presidents and parliaments, before international organizations and environmental summits. The COVID-19 debacle has cleared away any lingering doubts that this was the effect, whether intended or not, of the social dethronement of Christ: His spiritual dethronement in the Church.

> "Do Catholics *understand* how we got to a situation where millions of unborn children are murdered in the womb each year, and people think that men can marry men, or women women? This did not happen overnight, the result of an avalanche of money and political pressure. It is the culmination of a long historical process, the accelerating application of a process of revolt against first principles of nature and grace, beginning with the Protestant Revolt against ecclesiastical authority and sacred tradition, achieving its paradigm in the French Revolution's rejection of temporal authority and human tradition, and sliding downhill to the Sexual Revolution's rejection of social co-responsibility and self-restraint. …
>
> If the Kingship of Christ is not understood to have profound, immediate, and uncompromisable political and economic ramifications for all mankind, including Americans, then it is not understood *at all*. Or rather, it has been domesticated, defanged and declawed by the self-worshiping modern State — a Catholicism rendered harmless as a vague spirituality to which none can object as long as it has no worldly consequences. This purely subjective feel-good 'religion' is *not* the incarnational confession of the Son of God by the Church of God, stretching from the first Adam to the last man before the trumpet sounds, and we would do well

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> to spew it forth as the poison it is, without pretending there can be harmony between Christ and Belial (cf. 2 Cor. 6:14-17). The only antidote is the traditional, authentic, full-bodied, sacramental, incarnational Social Doctrine of the Church, given its fullest and most classic expression in the magisterium of Leo XIII." (source)

Again and again, we circle back to Leo XIII, the "pope of the social question," who, in reality, was much more than that: he was the pope who successfully brought the Church into dialogue with modernity — unlike the Second Vatican Council, which placed the Church into dhimmitude with Modernism. Leo XIII's engagement was, however, not in the style of Pope Francis but rather *Saint* Francis, who marched straight into the enemy (Islamic) camp and began to preach the Gospel of conversion for the salvation of souls. And although he did not succeed, he made it clear where he stood, and won grudging respect for his courage. The wordy and worldly encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* of Francis falls into shadow compared with the pure and luminous doctrine of Leo XIII's *Humanum Genus*.

Conclusion

We know where to find the uncorrupted springs of Catholic Social Teaching; it is now for us to drink deeply, and gain strength. The only basis on which we can proceed today is the clarity of the truth, spoken out of love for souls. The conversion, the Christianization, of our societies will not come easily; they have been inoculated, as it were, against Christ. Our task, at any rate, is simple enough: to exemplify the good fruits of embracing Him as the Truth, to help our neighbors in every way we can to draw nearer to Him, and to be prepared to suffer, *usque ad sanguinem*, if the New World Order tells us to trample on the image of the Crucified and Glorified King.

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