



4. March 2026
LENTEN SPIRITUAL RETREAT
Day 15: “The Flower of Peace”

On the fifteenth day of our Lenten journey, I find myself in Jerusalem writing this meditation under the shadow of military action between the United States, Israel, and Iran. On the morning of February 28, 2026, a bombing campaign against Iran began under the name “Operation Roaring Lion.” Iran responded with missile launches announced by sirens throughout much of Israel, including Jerusalem.

Today's reading, taken from the Book of Esther (13:8–11, 15–17), attests to God's omnipotence, and the Gospel (Matthew 20:17–28) speaks of Christ's reign.

The context of the reading is that the Persian king Ahasuerus, influenced by Haman, his second-in-command, was about to carry out the extermination of all the Jews in his kingdom. In his great distress, Mordecai, an illustrious Jew who served in the palace, raised this plea to God:

“O Lord, Lord, almighty king, for all things are in thy power, and there is none that can resist thy will, if thou determine to save Israel. Thou hast made heaven and earth and all things that are under the cope of heaven. Thou art Lord of all, and there is none that can resist thy majesty. And now, O Lord, O king, O God of Abraham, have mercy on thy people, because our enemies resolve to destroy us, and extinguish thy inheritance. Despise not thy portion, which thou hast redeemed for thyself out of Egypt. Hear my supplication, and be merciful to thy lot and inheritance, and turn our mourning into joy, that we may live and praise thy name, O Lord, and shut not the mouths of them that sing to thee.”

Here, the omnipotence of God is praised—He is capable of using any situation in favor of His people when they sincerely invoke Him. With this certainty of faith, Mordecai addresses the Lord and, through his confident prayer, anticipates the solution to the desperate situation of the Jews. May God intervene, may God save, may God have mercy, may God turn tears into joy, may God remember His choice, so that His people may continue to praise His works!

We know prayers like this—full of power and confidence—invoking God in His omnipotence, which nothing and no one can resist. These are prayers our Father hears and is pleased with because they express reality. Instead of falling into despair, those who are threatened, who have no human possibility of escaping danger, entrust themselves

to the omnipotence of the heavenly Father. And rightly so! God is the Lord of all, and nothing and no one can resist Him.

But how does God want to establish His absolute sovereignty on earth?

The Gospel gives us the answer: God sends His Son, endowed with all the power of divinity, who becomes man. However, He does not come into the world with the pomp of a human prince, nor does He visibly establish His kingdom. On the contrary, He instructs His disciples:

"But Jesus called them to him and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave; even as the Son of man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Mt 20:25–28).

The reign of God on earth is therefore totally different from external power and magnificence. It is a reign that seeks to establish itself in the hearts of people. They must come to know His servant love, which is nonetheless almighty. The Lord's public ministry was accompanied by countless signs and miracles: He healed the sick and freed the possessed, thus proving His divine sonship and glorifying the heavenly Father. Jesus does not resort to violence to bring people to faith. His weapon is the inexhaustible love that comes from the Father's heart and flows to us through His own. It is a different kingdom, a kingdom not of this world, as Jesus testifies before Pilate (Jn 18:36). *"He has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted those of low degree,"* as the Virgin Mary proclaims in her song of praise (Lk 1:52).

Without ruling out the legitimate and necessary use of armed force in the world, which must serve to defend against evil, we must remember that the kingdom we serve when we follow Christ is different. It calls us to the service of love. Our Lord tells us: *"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God."* (Matthew 5:5, 9)

So today, in the face of the enmity between Israel and Iran, now manifesting itself in concrete acts of war, I want to invite you to pray for true peace. How I wish there were another way to resolve conflicts, without hearing fighter jets overhead, without hearing the sirens with their sad and threatening tone, without feeling the impact of missiles, and without learning from the news about the dead and wounded! Is it not possible?

From today's meditation, I would like to pick a flower of peace and invite those who are listening to join us in prayer with this song from Harpa Dei which implores God's mercy: <https://youtu.be/663oViTBcE>.

Let us believe in the omnipotence of God, capable of changing everything, and in the gentle dominion of His Son Jesus Christ, who desires to establish His Kingdom of true peace among us!

Meditation on the reading of the day: <https://en.elijamission.net/2022/03/16/>

Meditation on the Gospel of the day: <https://en.elijamission.net/2021/03/03/>