

## Day Seven: *Don't Settle for Mediocrity*

*“Even if others do not demand much from you, you must demand of [it] yourselves....” (St. John Paul II)*

In 1987—while many of us may have still been in the womb or in diapers or still yet to be conceived—Pope St. John Paul II made his third pilgrimage to his beloved homeland: Poland. During his pilgrimage he made a stop in Westerplatte to meet with youth, and it was not by coincidence that he choose the thin peninsula along Poland’s Baltic seacoast. It was at Westerplatte on September 1, 1939 that World War II began. A division of outnumbered Polish soliders—mostly young men and only about 200 of them to be exact—withstood six days of bombardment by German warships, marines and dive-bombers, without surrendering.

To the young men and women gathered on that peninsula the Holy Father said,

“Each one of you...will find in your life your own Westerplatte. A task you must assume and complete. Some just cause, in which it is impossible not to fight. Some duty, some obligation, from which [you] cannot escape, and from which it is impossible to desert. A certain order of truths and values you are obliged to maintain and defend.”

We must all face our own Westerplatte. To face it courageously and victoriously we must create the disposition of heart here and now to never settle for mediocrity. This is the fruit of our meditation. Even if others do not demand much from us, we must demand it of ourselves.

A “slave”<sup>2</sup> of Jesus through Mary cannot make compromises in the moral or religious realm. The world loves compromises. It loves them because it cannot stand greatness. Why? Because the world is opposed to God, and greatness (true greatness, not the superficial kind) always redounds back to Him. Perfection in the world, whether it be moral, spiritual, intellectual, artistic, etc, points us back to Him, the Source of all perfection and goodness.

The world and the worldly-minded also love compromise because they see in it a means to peace, especially peace of hearts and consciences; but it’s a false peace. It’s a peace that last only as long as no one comes around to challenge the *status quo*. Hence mediocrity. If no one aspires to perfection, then everyone can enjoy peace of conscience; everyone can live as they please; everyone can carry-on as usual.

At Westerplatte on September 1<sup>st</sup>, 1939 true peace was not going to come in compromising with the invading German army, but in withstanding it. Likewise, true peace of heart and true peace of conscience cannot come through making compromises with the world but in withstanding it. Peace of heart and conscience is found in heroism, not mediocrity—in holiness, not worldliness.

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<sup>2</sup> “According to St. Louis de Montfort, total consecration must be understood in terms of a total surrender of oneself to Our Lady so that one might belong totally and without reservation to the Lord Jesus Christ. Because of this insistence on a radically complete, a total, belonging to Our Lord and Our Lady, he frequently uses the term ‘Holy Slavery’ as another name for his spirituality of consecration” (Fr. Hugh Gillespie, *Preparation for Total Consecration to Jesus through Mary*, 9).

“If you have an ardent desire for the Lord,” says St. John Paul II (certainly preparing to consecrate yourself to Him through Mary shows that you do), “then you will steer clear of the mediocrity and conformism so widespread in our society.”

The world is full of mediocre people. Hell is full of mediocre people. Heaven is not. The last is full of saints and the first yearns for them too. Even if others do not demand holiness of you, you must demand it of yourself. Your eternal life depends on it.

*Questions to guide your meditation:*

Where am I settling for mediocrity? In knowing God? In my prayer life? In my observance of the commandments? In my reception of the sacraments? In the giving of myself to others? In my studies? In my job? In my vocational responsibilities?

Am I living in the illusion that sanctity will just happen on God’s time without my having to strive after it? Do I make resolutions? Do I keep them? Do I have ideals? Are they Christian ideals or worldly ones?

**- Today’s Prayer -**

Heavenly Father,  
Give me the courage to strive for the highest goals,  
to flee every temptation to be mediocre.  
Enable me to aspire to greatness, as your saints did,  
and to open my heart with joy to Your call to holiness.  
Free me from the fear of failure.  
I want to be, Lord, firmly and forever united to You.  
Grant me the graces I ask You through [*your patron saint*]'s intercession,  
by the merits of Our Lord Jesus Christ.  
Amen.