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THE IGNATIAN OBEDIENCE AND REPRESENTATION

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To everyone who is denied of the opportunity to listen to the interior motions
of the Holy Spirit and to represent.

To the voiceless marginalized
who are right in front, still unnoticed
may Christ in them command obedience from us
may the Holy Spirit in them create motions in us for representation.

Abbreviations

AA.VV	Various Authors
AAS	<i>Acta Apostolicae Sedis</i> , Roma 1909ss.
Ab	<i>Autobiografía</i>
ActRSJ	<i>Acta Romana Societatis Iesu</i>
AHSI	<i>Archivum Historicum Societatis Iesu</i>
AL	<i>Leonis XIII P. M. Acta</i> , Roma 1891ss.
AL	<i>Amoris Laetitia</i>
AR	<i>Acta Romana Societatis Iesu</i>
Au	<i>Autobiography</i>
C	General Congregation (in quotes from J. W. PADBERG, M. D. O'KEEFE & J. L. MCCARTHY)
CD	Collected Decrees of the GC 27
CIC	Code of Canon Law (1983)
CIS	Centrum Ignatianum Spiritualitatis
Co, Cons	<i>Constituciones</i>
D. / d.	Decree
DEI	<i>Diccionario de Espiritualidad Ignaciana</i>
DHCH	<i>Diccionario Histórico de la Compañía de Jesús</i>
DV	<i>(Dei Verbum)</i> Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation. Vatican II, 1965
EE	<i>Ejercicios Espirituales</i>
FGC	Formula of a General Congregation
FPG	Formula of a Provincial Congregation
FN	<i>Fontes Narrativi</i>
GC	General Congregation of the Society of Jesus
GS	<i>(Gaudium et Spes)</i> Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World. Vatican II, 1965
MHSI	<i>Monumenta Historica Societatis Iesu</i>
MIEpp.	Monumenta Ignatiana, Epistolae
n.	number
NC	Complementary Norms (<i>Normae Complementariae Constitutionum Societatis</i>)
OT	<i>(Optatam Totius)</i> Decree on Priestly Formation. Vatican II, 1965
PC	<i>(Perfectae Caritatis)</i> Decree on the Adaptation and Renewal of the Religious Life. Vatican II, 1965
Sp.Ex.	Spiritual Exercises

Table of Content

Abbreviations.....	i
General Introduction	1

Chapter 1

The Ignatian idea of the obedience	5
1. Obedience – Characteristic virtue	6
2. Do we obey for Superior’s merits?	7
3. The foundation - Christ.....	8
4. Three degrees of obedience	9
5. The Perfect Obedience	12
6. Means to The Third Degree.....	14
7. Representation	15
7.1 Representation is not confrontation	18
7.2 Example of St Ignatius.....	18
7.3 Representation is not democratization	19
8. Conclusion	20

Chapter 2

Obedience in the Bible	21
1. In the Old Testament.....	22
1.1 God's initiative	23
1.2 To hear means to fulfill	23
1.3 Covenant demands obedience	24
1.4 Law - Foundation of religion and ethics.....	25
2. Obedience in the New Testament	26
2.1 Jesus - the continuity of the Old Testament	27
2.2 Obedience and early Christians	28
2.3 Apostles and obedience	28
2.4 Obedience reflected as morality	30
2.5 Obedience to Civil Authority	31
2.5.1 Obedience in family	32
2.5.2 Jesus the model of authority.....	32
3. Obedience, disobedience and representation	33
3.1 Representation in the pre-historic time	33
3.1.1 Sin enters humanity	34
3.2 The God of Abraham and representation	34
3.3 The God of Moses and representation.....	36
3.4 Representation and Mary	37
3.4.1 Representation and Jesus	38
3.4.2 Gethsemane - Representation rejected?	39
4. Conclusion.....	39

Chapter 3

Obedience – Representation in Magisterium.....	41
1. Obedience in Pre-Vatican II writings.....	42
1.1 Total obedience for the sake of God.....	45
1.2 Mediation and Situational ethics.....	47
1.3 Obedience and human conscience.....	47
1.4 Dignity of citizens.....	50
1.5 Disobedience.....	51
1.6 Obedience to the Church.....	54
1.7 Temptations of withdrawal of obedience.....	55
1.8 Obedience to the Church in All matters.....	57
1.9 Conflict situations.....	57
1.10 Rule of moderation.....	59
2. Obedience in Vatican II.....	62
2.1 The Obedience - the Guide.....	62
2.2 In Collaboration.....	64
2.3 Mary the model of obedience.....	66
2.4 Obedience in Religious life.....	67
2.5 Priests and seminarians.....	69
2.6 Obedience – Fruit of familiar dialogue.....	74
2.7 Obedience and Lay faithful.....	76
3. Mutuality in Amoris laetitia.....	78
3.1 Mysticism of mutuality.....	79

4. Dialogue in <i>Laudato si'</i>	80
5. Conclusion	81

Chapter 4

Obedience in the Documents of General Congregations 27 - 3583

1. In the Collected Decrees of the GC 27	84
2. In the documents of GCs 28 - 30	86
3. In the documents of the GC 31	88
3.1 The life of obedience	90
4. Representation to the Pope from the GC 32	92
4.1 Union in the Society	93
5. In the documents of GC 33	96
6. In the documents of GC 34	97
6.1 Revision of the law	101
6.2 The Pope's response to the representation of the GC 34	102
7. In the documents of GC 35	103
7.1 Theology of obedience	104
8. Conclusion	109

General Conclusion.....111

Bibliography115

General Introduction

St Ignatius and the First companions spent a long time, very many days, used all prayers and methods accustomed through spiritual exercises to discern the theme of obedience. Finally, they decided unanimously to obey one among them.

Pasados, pues muchos días, en que por una y otra parte ventilamos largamente acerca de la solución de la duda, pensando y examinando... vacando a los ejercicios acostumbrados de la oración... favorecidos finalmente del auxilio divino, concluimos (no por pluralidad de votos, sino por total concordia de dictámenes), sernos más expediente y necesario dar la obediencia a alguno de nosotros para mejor y más exactamente poder ejecutar nuestros primeros deseos de cumplir en todo la voluntad de Dios, para más seguramente conservar la Compañía...¹ Y es que en la base de “la teología concreta de Ignacio de Loyola se encuentra la persuasión de que el Espíritu Santo es el alma de toda realidad divina aquí abajo, y el agente primero de la historia sobrenatural del hombre”².

Saint Ignatius, after his conversion, burning with a desire to win souls for God, went about preaching and giving Spiritual Exercises and formed a group of Friends in the Lord. The ‘Friends in the Lord’ having been formed in the Spiritual Exercises, they were men of discernment. They discerned and sought the will of God in all they did. Though they all had respect towards Master Ignatius as the man who gathered them together he was not their leader or none other for that matter. However, the birth of the vow of obedience in their life was marked by discernment as narrated above. As they could not fulfill their desire to go to the Holy Land to work there for the salvation of souls, they decided to offer themselves at the service of the Holy Father. As they put themselves together to know the will of God through communal discernment they arrived at the first two decisions namely to remain a group and to

¹ MHSI Ser. III, I, 7. Citado en J. ARROYO, “La Congregación General de la Compañía de Jesús, como Compañía en discernimiento”: *Manresa* 55 (1983) 211-223, 215.

² J. LEWIS, S.J., *Le gouvernement Spirituel selon Saint Ignace de Loyola*, Desclée de Brouwer 1961, 35. Citado en J. ARROYO, 216.

obey the Pope, the Vicar of Christ on earth, rather quickly. However, when they took up the third question of obeying one among them was not easy and much less quick to decide.³

We live five centuries after them. How has this vow been modified and contextualized over the period? How to impart and inculcate this virtue in candidates who would like to become Jesuits? Is the culture today compatible with this vow? Every candidate from India would have some or other experience in three different levels, in a patriarchal family that values man more than woman, in the casteistic society that imposes obedience by one's caste or race and in global scenario powerful and rich exploiting nations dictating terms to the exploited nations. The following is one of the latest (08.06.2016) news reports that Dalits suffer multiple discrimination in India within the Catholic Church.

Conversion from Hinduism to other religions, it is generally argued, is to escape the untouchability and caste-based discrimination inherent in Hinduism. Christianity, however, is not able to eradicate untouchability, and casteism continues to dominate both the Protestant and Catholic Church even though Dalits form the majority of the Christian population in Tamil Nadu. (...) though Dalits account for 22,40,726 of the total population of 39,64,360 Catholics, they have not been given any important posts in Church administration. In some churches, the body of Dalits are not allowed for rituals. "Dalits in Punnaivanam, Rayappanpatti, Chithalacheri, Hanumanthanpatti, Pullampadi, Poondi and Eraiyur are fighting for their rights. Even the internationally renowned Velankannai Basilica is not an exception (...)."⁴

In May 2016, a Catholic Bishop was abducted by some and beaten up for money; some priests of the diocese were behind the crime. Even a month after the news was published, almost none of the Indian Cardinals, Archbishops and Bishops condemned the crime. Fr Bosco, a former Jesuit Provincial prophetically questioned the silence: Were they silent, because the victim was a Dalit?⁵

In the global scenario, well defined rights of the poor and duties of the rich are embalmed in the *Constitutions* of nations and republic unions and other unions of nations. Political parties come to power by hook or crook. Multi-national markets sign up memorandums of understanding with governments to loot the poor masses lawfully. People are forced to obey the rules detrimental to their lives and that of their future generations and still have no choice to raise their voices.

³ Cf. A. HERBERT., *Obediencia*, en GRUPO DE ESPIRITUALIDAD IGNACIANA (ED.), *Diccionario de Espiritualidad Ignaciana*, Mensajero-Sal Terrae, Bilbao-Santander ²2007, 1325-1337, 1327. Here after it is cited as *DEI*.

⁴ <http://www.ucanindia.in/news/new-report-on-discrimination-within-the-church-in-tamil-nadu/32322/daily> accessed on 08.06.2016 at 11.30 p.m. Also <http://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/chennai/discrimination-within-the-church/article8695096.ece> accessed on 08.06.2016 at 11.30 p.m.

⁵ Cf. <http://www.thecsf.org/2016/05/23/dalit-jesuit-tells-bishops-that-the-indian-church-discriminates-against-dalits/> accessed on 08.06.2016 at 6.30 p.m.

When I gave a class presentation on the ‘Religious formation’, my classmates in Madrid asked me many questions regarding challenges in the context of India. A point that came to my mind was that of obedience. As the candidates were as young as 17 or 18-year-old they all seem to be very obedient to the formators. There seems to be no problem in training them especially with regard to obedience. It is, in my opinion, because they come with the traditional and cultural understanding of obedience. It is difficult to ascertain how much of the real spirit of religious obedience is imparted and imbibed.

In the above-mentioned experiences in the patriarchal, casteistic and pseudo-democratic contexts, we see clearly that the obedience is imposed on children, women, Dalits, tribals and cultural, linguistic and religious minorities. What does Ignatian obedience have to contribute to them, especially to a candidate hailing from that context? How could we impart the Ignatian spirit of obedience in an applicable and accepted manner without denying the fact that the context is wounded and torn / wounding and tearing?

This paper in the following four chapters deals with the theme in four different perspective viz Ignatian, biblical, Magisterial and that of General Congregations of the Society of Jesus. Within each chapter, the presentation is more chronological than thematic. The objective of the paper is to profoundly study the theme in the above perspectives that mostly overlap with one another which could help candidates⁶ to compare with their experiences of obedience.

The first chapter does not present the biblical perspective but the Ignatian perspective which is the focus of the paper. It explores the different aspects of the obedience as presented in his famous letter on obedience to all the Jesuits of Portugal and his instructions on making representation to the superior from another letter. In the second chapter, the paper intends to trace out some roots of obedience and representation from the Bible, the common source of Christian living and spirituality. Some events in the life of some key figures such as Adam and Eve our first parents, Abraham the father of faith, Moses the faithful servant, Jesus the new Adam, and Mary the new Eve, the Apostles and their teachings help us in our effort.

The third chapter, obedience in Magisterium, begins with the encyclicals of Pope Leo XIII, the master of obedience among the popes who has addressed directly on obedience in his social

⁶ Here the term ‘candidate’ could be taken to mean not only the candidate in formation but even the so called formed members in the process of religious journey living under obedience and authority. Cf. L. M. GARCIA DOMÍNGUEZ, *El libro del discípulo. El acompañamiento espiritual*, Sal Terrae – Mensajero, Santander-Bilbao 2011, 17. Also Cf. M. NAMIKAWA, “La paciencia del crecimiento y la maduración del hombre recién hecho al hombre perfecto de Ireneo de Lyon”: *Estudios Eclesiásticos* 83 (2008) 51-85, 52. It explains, “In order to realize God’s plan for creation-salvation, both the human being and God become accustomed to each other.”

teachings. Pre-Vatican II documents, Vatican II documents and post-Vatican documents are studied to scan through the theme of obedience with its closely linked aspects such as disobedience, representation, authority. They are filled with the aroma of the biblical wisdom, patristic experiences and philosophical touch. The documents of the second Vatican council take into consideration social sciences, psychological insights and cultural cosmic vision. Post-Vatican documents affirm all the earlier ones and open the obedience to dialogue and mutuality. Thus, the Magisterium opens the candidates from a spiritual and experiential perspective of the Holy Bible to the obedience lived out by lay people, religious, priests and bishops in and through historical challenges and realities, philosophies and ideologies and human sciences and technological growth.

The fourth and the last chapter runs through the theme presented directly and indirectly in the Decrees of General Congregations and presents the theme with special respect to Jesuits. GCs examine the historical context to redefine the Jesuit identity and to reorient the mission today. Along with the ideas, insights and invention on the theme they give a methodology of life and spirituality. A candidate could be helped to experience a comprehensive Jesuit perspective in the light of faith towards the vow of obedience which is the motor of missions.

Thus, this paper aims, to put it negatively, not to invent its own new principles of obedience, nor to intend to propose new changes. It is a humble effort to enter into the Ignatian world view of obedience, with the help of the Bible, the Magisterium of the Church and the documents of the GCs to create an ambience and a platform of dialogue – with the victims and oppressors of the context mentioned. The paper limits itself with the presentation of the theme. However, the scope of the paper aims at the ongoing formation of the candidates. Their dialogue with these texts could help them clarify the following possible questions in their minds and hearts. We have enough and more imposed obedience (or superiority, in the case of those from affluent groups); should we live under one more obedience (or take up another superior-ship)? Must I obey my own caste man? Must I obey a Dalit or a tribal, if he is appointed as a superior? Can a Dalit or a tribal be a superior and control the so called high caste men? In what way, is it different from the one we are suffering from? Will it aggravate the situation or alleviate it? Thus, to put the scope of the paper in positive terms, it is a small attempt to read or to narrate the Ignatian obedience to those who suffer imposed obedience or superiority, inviting them to compare and contrast with their personal experiences and allowing them to feel and cherish the call and invitation of God to do His will.

Chapter 1

The Ignatian idea of the obedience⁷

Let us begin with the meaning of the word: Oxford dictionary defines ‘obedience’ as ‘to do what you are told to do’. And etymologically ‘obey’ comes from the word ‘*ob-audire*’ which means ‘do what you hear’ and the meaning of the word obedience is ‘submission to a higher power of authority’ from Old French, usage of c.1200.⁸ The obedience is the oft-repeated and well-cherished theme of the Holy Bible.⁹ All the books of the Bible especially that of wisdom, eulogize it in many ways. In the era of the Fathers of the Church obedience was considered as to obey the Word of God and doing it in one’s life.¹⁰ The obedience of St Antony the Great to the Word of God gave birth to a new form life in the history of the Church, hermitage. In the life of St Ignatius and that of the Society it plays a vital role which is very well recognized by all scholars and popes.¹¹

⁷ This chapter is a modified version of the first chapter of the author’s unpublished work viz. DEVASAGAYAM A.I., *The Ignatian obedience and representation and their roots in the writings of St Ignatius of Loyola*. Trabajo fin de Máster, Upcomillas, Madrid 2016.

⁸ Cf. <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/obedience>

⁹ Cf. J. L. ESPINEL, *Obediencia – Fundamentación Bíblica*, en A.A. V.V., *Diccionario Teológico de la Vida Consagrada*, Publicaciones Claretianas, Madrid 2000, 1171-1181, 1172.

¹⁰ Cf. AA.VV., *Una tentativa de síntesis Obediencia Cristiana, Religiosa (y) Ignaciana*, Centrum Ignatianum Spiritualitatis, Roma, 1979, 60.

¹¹ MANUEL M^A ESPINOSA POLIT, *La Obediencia Perfecta – comentario a la carta de la obediencia de San Ignacio de Loyola*, Editorial Ecuatoriana, Quito, 1940, 29.

All Ignatian themes have their roots in one or other life experience of St Ignatius. *Spiritual Exercises* are sum and substance of all, for it contains the whole in an embryonic form. However, his letters play a vital role in explaining the dynamics of the *Spiritual Exercises* and all other Ignatian themes. Here in this chapter let us explore the various aspects of Ignatian Obedience. One of his letters that he wrote to all Jesuits of Portugal comes handy to know his mind regarding the theme. Let us proceed to investigate the theme in the order of presentation by St Ignatius in his letter and parallel commentaries on the same. Meissner divides the letter into eight parts as in the Spanish version¹² with sub-headings to understand and present it in an organized manner. The letter to the Members of the Society in Portugal¹³ – 26 March 1553 on Perfect Obedience contains following eight parts.¹⁴ 1. Obedience Is to Be the Characteristic Virtue of the Society 2. The Foundation of Obedience 3. Degree of Obedience 4. General Means for Attaining Obedience 5. Particular Means for Attaining Obedience 6. Representation 7. Final Observations and 8. Final Exhortation.

However, this is not the first letter of St Ignatius on obedience. He had already written a few earlier.¹⁵ Almost in every letter he wrote to the Jesuits as the General of the Society he mentioned obedience. This letter being the latest contained all points and was most comprehensive.

1. Obedience – Characteristic virtue

First and foremost, St Ignatius puts forth his view very categorically that the obedience must be the characteristic virtue of Jesuits. “(...) although I wish you all perfection in every virtue and spiritual gift, it is true (as you have heard from me on other occasions), that it is in obedience more than in any other virtue that God our Lord gives me the desire to see you signalize yourselves. (... He quotes St. Gregory who reflects the words of the Book of Wisdom) Fear of God is beginning of wisdom. (And says,) obedience is the only virtue which plants all the other virtues in the mind.”¹⁶

¹² SAN IGNACIO DE LOYOLA, *Obras*, BAC, Madrid ⁵1991, 932-942.

¹³ M.I. Epp, IV, 669-81. Letter 3304.

¹⁴ W. W. MEISSNER, *To The Greater Glory – A Psychological Study of Ignatian Spirituality*, Marquette University Press, Milwaukee, 1999, 383-390. Also in WILLIAM J. YOUNG, *Letters of St. Ignatius of Loyola*, Loyola University Press, Chicago Illinois 1959. 287-296.

¹⁵ IGNACIO DE LOYOLA, *A los padres y hermanos de Gandía*. el 29 de julio 1547, *M. I. Epp.* XII, 331-338.

IGNACIO DE LOYOLA, *Sociis Conimbricensibus*. el 14 enero de 1548, *M. I. Epp.* I, 687-695.

IGNACIO DE LOYOLA, *Patri Andreae Oviedo Ex comm.* el 27 marzo 1548, *M. I. Epp.* II, 54-65.

¹⁶ The Letter 2. (In this and the following footnotes ‘The Letter No.’ denotes the letter of St Ignatius and the number of the Paragraph.)

Y aunque en todas virtudes y gracias espirituales os deseo toda perfección, es verdad (como habréis de mí oído otras veces) que en la obediencia más particularmente que en ninguna otra, me da deseo Dios nuestro Señor de veros señalar, (...) **la obediencia es una virtud, que sola ella ingiere en el ánima las otras virtudes, e impresas las conserva;** y en tanto que ésta floreciere, todas las demás se verán florecer y llevar el fruto que yo en vuestras ánimas deseo, y el que demanda el que redimió por obediencia el mundo perdido por falta de ella, **hecho obediente hasta la muerte, y muerte de cruz.** En otras religiones podemos sufrir que nos hagan ventaja en ayunos, (...); pero en la puridad y perfección de la obediencia, con la resignación verdadera de nuestras voluntades y abnegación de nuestros juicios, mucho deseo, Hermanos carísimos, que se señalen los que en esta Compañía sirven a Dios nuestro Señor, y que en esto se conozcan los hijos verdaderos de ella; nunca mirando la persona a quien se obedece, sino en ella a Cristo nuestro Señor, por quien se obedece.¹⁷

And further he says that we may allow ourselves to be surpassed by other religious orders in fasts, vigils, and other austerities. However, in the purity and perfection of obedience together with the true resignation of our wills and the abnegation of our judgment, our Society should be conspicuous. This virtue shows us, as men who regard not the person whom they obey, but in him Christ our Lord, for whose sake they obey. Pierre Blet puts it as obedience vinculum – The bondage of obedience. “States or nations have a concrete territory which is a bond of union. In the ancient orders cloister, choir, chapters safeguarded the unity of monastery.”¹⁸ To this ‘*communitas ad dispersionem*’ the obedience is the bonding and unifying factor.

2. Do we obey for Superior’s merits?

Our obedience is not according to the standard of the world. The people of the world submit to power, wealth and wisdom. “However, the Sons of the Society of Jesus obey the superior not because —he is prudent, or good, or qualified by any other gift of God (...) Nor on the contrary, should he lack prudence, is he to be the less obeyed (...)”¹⁹ In this regard it is good to remind us of the writings on the misconceptions regarding ‘obedience’ by Karl Rahner.²⁰ The religious obedience is not that of children. They owe it to their parents, elders and teachers for their growth. The purpose of it is to make them independent as they grow, in other words ‘eventual disappearance’ of the same. It could be considered, to an extent, similar to the obedience of the monks, to a self-chosen elderly Monk, for their self-perfection in spiritual matters in the era of desert fathers. Once he grows to a level of spiritual maturity and independence he is free from instinctive drives and other immaturity. Therefore, he needs the elderly monk lesser and lesser. Therefore, K. Rahner says:

¹⁷ Carta 2. (in this and the following footnotes ‘Carta No.’ denotes the Spanish version of the same letter.

¹⁸ PIERRE BLET, “Foundations of Ignatian Obedience”, *Ignis* 22 (1993) 162-173, 163.

¹⁹ The Letter 3.

²⁰ KARL RAHNER, S. J., *Reflections on Obedience – a basic Ignatian Concept*: Cross Currents 98/4 (1969), 363-374. Translated by ERWIN W. GEISSMAN. Accessed from the electronic document ATLASerials (American Theological Library Association).

Superiors should not act as if by nature or by reason of their office they are more intelligent, more clever, more morally steadfast, or more provident and wise in the ways of the world. This may be true in individual cases, for the world is not so constructed that only the more stupid become superiors. But it should be soberly stated (for subjects, lest they demand too much of superiors, something which would be unjust and show a lack of charity; for superiors, lest they delude themselves) (...) ²¹

He repeats again and again that the religious obedience is not that of a child. However, there are superiors and subjects who are happy and content with 'educational relationship' of imparting the knowledge. They are not at ease with that of an adult to adult dialogical matured relationship.

Here, we can add the sociological merits / demerits one is born with. In the time of St Ignatius, Jewish converts were discriminated against. Priests, religious and bishops of nobility were very easily and 'naturally' accepted. This contradicts the 'super natural obedience' which comes from above '*de arriba*' that makes one to look up to heaven, Christ. "Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all." (Col 3:11). ²² If we do not obey the superior for his merits, then why do we obey him?

3. The foundation - Christ

St Ignatius negating our obedience to the merits of the superior affirms, "because he holds the place and the authority of God, as Eternal Truth has said: "He that hears you, hears me; and he that despises you, despises me. (In the case of a non-meritorious superior,) since he represents Him who is infallible wisdom, and who will supply what is wanting in His minister." ²³ Ignatian obedience is Christo-centric and Theo-centric. Here he sounds St Benedict, —The Superior is in the place of God. Further St Ignatius reminds of the words of Our Lord what commands us to obey the Scribes and Priests because they take the seat of Moses, authority given by God. Moreover, he juxtaposes the religious leaders with the pagan leaders of St Paul, of whom he instructed the Christians to serve as they would serve Christ.

Pues ni porque el Superior sea muy prudente, (...) sino porque tiene sus veces y autoridad debe ser obedecido, diciendo la eterna verdad: *El que a vosotros oye, a mí me oye; y el que a vosotros desprecia, a mí me desprecia*; ni, al contrario, por ser la persona menos prudente se le ha de dejar de obedecer en lo que es Superior, (...); pues expresamente Cristo nuestro Señor, habiendo dicho: *En la cátedra de Moisés se sentaron y leyeron los Escribas y Fariseos*, añade: *Guardad, pues, y haced las cosas todas que os dijeren, pero no hagáis conforme a sus obras*.

²¹ Ibid. 363-364.

²² New International Version, accessed from <http://biblehub.com/colossians/3-11.htm>

²³ PIERRE BLET, o.c., 165.

Así que todos querría os ejercitádes en reconocer en cualquiera Superior a Cristo nuestro Señor, y reverenciar y obedecer a su divina majestad en él con toda devoción; (...).²⁴

And further interrogates us the Jesuits if Christians must love, serve and obey the pagan leaders as they would do to Christ, how much the Jesuits must do to their Superiors. “From this you can judge (...) he ought to be looked upon as man or rather as the Vicar of Christ our Lord. (Obedience goes further than subordination to civic authorities – out of love for Christ.) It is out of love that obedience is accepted and practiced, it is out of love that this sacrifice of self is realized.”²⁵

4. Three degrees of obedience

The major part of the letter discusses the three degrees of Obedience. The obedience is not merely an exterior disciplining but complete renunciation of self, a holocaust of one’s whole being to God and seeking the will of God in apostolic action. The Exercises are means to arrive at a good election of state of life. In a similar manner, the *Constitutions* of which the Obedience is the corner stone, are for the Jesuits means to make a good election in his mission and apostolic methods.²⁶ He categorizes obedience into three types.

The Primary and low is obedience of execution²⁷ of what is commanded. It is not worthy to bear the name of Obedience. It looks all perfect to the onlookers. However, the one who carries out obedience of execution knows that his heart was not in what he did. The result is achieved outwardly. We could compare this to the one who does anything his/her friend asks of without feeling it or thinking about it.

Many result-oriented and ambitious superiors prefer this type of superficial obedience from their subjects. Those subjects who are timid and lukewarm satisfy themselves with this type of obedience. They are afraid of discerning and knowing the will of God to confirm or to represent their opinion over the matter concerned. It is mechanical, without real joy and involvement of the total person. God, the foundation of obedience, whom we ultimately obey, is not happy, content nor satisfied with this.²⁸ Therefore, we need a deeper kind of obedience.

²⁴ Carta 2.

²⁵ PIERRE BLET, o.c., 165.

²⁶ Cf. PIERRE BLET, o.c., 165.

²⁷ The Letter 5.

²⁸ Cf. MANUEL M^A ESPINOSA POLIT, o.c., 117.

The second, Obedience of Will,²⁹ is to make Superior's will one's own in which the execution of the command includes certain interior conformity. So it is better than the first, however it is liked or not. To explain the second kind of Obedience Ignatius quotes Scripture, "Obedience is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than fat of rams. ((1 Sam 15:22)).³⁰ And he avails the help of St Gregory.) In victims the flesh of another is slain, but in obedience our own will is sacrificed."³¹ It is the higher form of obedience in which one sacrifices his own will. This could be compared to the one who does what one's friend asks with willingness. S/he likes what the friend likes. However, s/he may not think in the same way and may not have reasons to support the action.

In explaining this St Ignatius demonstrates his ability of a psychologist and a spiritual master. We can cull out following elements of this second form of Obedience.

- a) **Of great worth:** Since the disposition of will in human is of so great worth, so also is the offering of it, when by obedience it is offered to his Creator and Lord.³² It is equal to lose one's liberty, in fact, to sacrifice to be master of oneself and one's human activities, in certain manner equivalent to disappear and die. It is similar to martyrdom.³³
- b) **Deception of thinking it lawful to withdraw from will:** *"There is always the dangerous deception for those who think it lawful to withdraw from the will of their superior, in all the matters even in those which of their nature are spiritual and holy, such as fasts, prayers, and other pious works!"*³⁴ Angelic Doctor St Thomas also has a similar view on the supremacy of obedience over the other religious vows.
- c) **Spiritual deception of earnestness:** *Cassian comments in the Conference of Daniel the Abbot: "It is one and the same kind of disobedience, whether in earnestness of labor or the desire of ease one breaks the command of the Superior, and as mischievous to go against the statutes of the monastery out of sloth as out of watchfulness; and finally, it is as bad to neglect the command of your abbot and spend the time reading as it would be*

²⁹ Cf. The Letter 5-8.

³⁰ New International Version accessed from http://biblehub.com/1_samuel/15-22.htm

³¹ The Letter 5.

³² Cf. The Letter 5.

³³ Cf. MANUEL M^A ESPINOSA POLIT, o.c., 121-122

³⁴ The Letter 5.

to sleep.”³⁵ As the demon sees that there is no apt way to perfection other than that of Obedience, puts a lot of unhappiness and difficulties in the appearance of good.³⁶

The over doing is as disobedient as the underperformance. In both, the enemy takes the person away from the will of the Superior. This, is a trick of the enemy about which Ignatius deals with in the *Spiritual Exercises*. “(The enemy) behaves as a chief bent on conquering and robbing what he desires: (...), attacks it on the weakest side, in like manner the enemy of human nature, (...) and where he finds us weakest (...) there he attacks us and aims at taking us.”³⁷ And in an advanced level, “It is proper to the evil Angel, who forms himself under the appearance of an angel of light, to enter with the devout soul and go out with himself: that is to say, to bring good and holy thoughts, conformable to such just soul, and then little by little he aims at coming out drawing the soul to his covert deceits and perverse intentions.”³⁸

d) **Obedience makes an act holy and pleasing to God:** The activity of Martha was holy, and holy the contemplation of Magdalene, and holy the penitence and tears with which she bathed the feet of Christ our Lord. But all this was to be done in Bethania, which is interpreted to mean, the house of obedience. It would seem, therefore, that Christ our Lord would give us to understand, as St Bernard remarks, “that neither the activity of good works, nor the leisure of contemplation, nor the tears of the penitent would have pleased Him out of Bethania.”³⁹

In the *Spiritual Exercises* the reflections on ‘Three kinds of humility’⁴⁰ could be compared here. The surrender of will is perfection of it. That is to say surrender makes the will to reach its completeness. Therefore, pleads his men to try to make the surrender of their wills entire and offer freely to God through His ministers the liberty He has bestowed on them. He also warns not to think it a slight advantage of their free will the ability of restoring it wholly in obedience to Him who gave it to you. In doing this they do not lose it, but rather perfect it. God is perfect. Then if our will is surrendered to God’s will it becomes perfect. How happy would a citizen of a country feel to be chosen by his/her king/queen to do his/her will! How blessed is such to turn celebrity over-night. Therefore, in the ‘Contemplation to obtain love’

³⁵ The Letter 5.

³⁶ Cf. MANUEL M^A ESPINOSA POLIT, o.c., 125.

³⁷ EE 327. Taken from *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola*. Translated from the Autograph by Father Elder Mullan, S.J., P.J. Kennedy & Sons, New York 1914.
Accessed from <http://www.companionofjesus.com/se-mullan.pdf>

³⁸ EE 332. Ibid.

³⁹ MANUEL M^A ESPINOSA POLIT, o.c.,138.

⁴⁰ Cf. EE 164-168.

one offers one's will. "Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my intellect, and all my will."⁴¹

Danger of drawing the will of the superior to one's own: St Ignatius warns against trying to draw the will of the superior to one's own. Its roots are self-love and inordinate attachment to one's own interests and conveniences. He advises with words of St. Bernard. "*Whoever endeavors either openly or covertly to have his spiritual father enjoin him what he himself desires, deceives himself if he flatters himself as a true follower of obedience. For in that stance he does not obey his superior, but rather the superior obeys him.*"⁴² "False obedience is real disobedience"⁴³ as Aicardo puts in his commentary on the *Constitutions* of the Society of Jesus. St Robert Bellarmine, in his exhortation on an occasion of renewal of vows, drives home this point very vividly with an example of a pen.

And this is how one becomes a servant of God: when he becomes His living instrument. For, as Aristotle says, an instrument is a non-living servant and a servant a living instrument. What qualities must a good instrument have? They are two: it must be in good condition, and it must be easy for the principal Cause to handle - and the second quality is the more important one. Suppose, for example, you have a pen which is in fine condition, but has the defect of writing the letter *b* when you want to write *a* and *a* when you want to write *b*. Your pen writes lovely but what good is that? On the other hand, if the pen is in poor condition but nevertheless obeys your hand, it may make unsightly letters, but at least people will understand what you write.⁴⁴

There are some over smart subjects who take advantage of the good or silent or timid nature of their superiors. They by their smartness, directly or indirectly, make the superiors say what they want. And so, Ignatius recommends that he who wishes to rise to the virtue of obedience must rise to this second degree.

5. The Perfect Obedience

Ignatius with his spirit of *magis* goes further to still higher and the perfect form of obedience, that of intellect and understanding.⁴⁵ Through the first and the second degrees one acts and wills like the superior. Hereby through the third degree of obedience one submits one's own judgment over the matter concerned and thinks the same as the superior. Will it be possible and

⁴¹ EE 234.

⁴² MANUEL M^A ESPINOSA POLIT, o.c., 138.

⁴³ Ibid. 138.

⁴⁴ ROBERT BELLARMINE, *Opera Oratoria Posthuma*, Vol. IX, Pont. Universitatis Gregoriana, Romae 1948. on the religious vows. Document: *a talk for the renovation of vows delivered in 1577, translated from by Martin E. Palmer S.J.* 249-256. 254-255.

⁴⁵ Cf. The Letter 9.

if so, how? In his explanation proves himself to be master of obedience and of psychological inner dynamism of inner heart - interior self.

“For while this faculty has got the freedom of the will, and naturally gives its assent to what is presented to it as true, there are, however, many instances where the evidence of the known truth is not coercive, and it can with the help of the will favor one side or the other.”⁴⁶ If it is the case, he recommends, every truly obedient man should conform his thought to the thought of the superior. This can be considered and compared to the one who does all that his/her friend likes willingly and added to that can give reasons same as that of the friend.

Further he goes on to explain the sacrificial and total oblation nature of obedience which is offered in total love for the Lord through the hands of His ministers on earth, superiors. He categorically affirms the need of the third degree of obedience explaining “just as in the celestial bodies, if the lower is to receive movement and influence from the higher it must be subject and subordinate, the one body being ordered and adjusted to the other; so, when one rational creature is moved by another, as takes place in obedience.”⁴⁷ Hugo Rahner upholds the third degree in these words: “Obedience of the intellect shouldn’t be just a dusty relic from our past, but rather the living spirit of today’s Society, in as much as that spirit seeks to mirror the obedience of Christ who died on the cross. (He also notes that obedience should be not merely a sociological tool for greater efficiency. ...) but it should be the lived proof of our love for the Lord. (He also observes to fill the lack of an interior vivifying principle of third degree of obedience, creating laws, dispositions and disciplinary norms would be) limitation on their personality and an invasion of their human dignity, an obstacle in the organic process of their growth in personal responsibility.”⁴⁸

The third degree of obedience keeps one from going astray. According to the words of the Scripture “Lean not upon thy own (prudence) understanding”.⁴⁹ The wise judges it to be true prudence not to rely on their own judgment, especially when personal interests are at stake. Men, because of their lack of self-control, are not good judges. So, we ought to follow the judgment of another even when he is not our superior rather than our own in matters concerning ourselves. Being aware of this human weakness St Ignatius has provided constitutionally consulters to the superiors. Therefore, he questions us, “How much more, then, the judgment of the superior whom we have taken as a guide to stand in the place of God and to interpret the

⁴⁶ The Letter 9.

⁴⁷ The Letter 9.

⁴⁸ HUGO RAHNER, *The Theological Meaning of Ignatian Obedience: Ignis* 10/2 (1981) 5-12, 11.

⁴⁹ New International Version accessed from <http://biblehub.com/proverbs/3-5.htm>

divine will for us? (Further he illustrates its importance in the spiritual matters with what Cassian says in the Conference of the Abbot Moses:) By no other vice does the devil draw a monk headlong and bring him to death sooner than by persuading him to neglect the counsel of the elders and trust to his own judgment and determination.”⁵⁰

Ignatius goes on to explain the gradual decadence of religious aspiration due to lack of the third degree of obedience. In the first place, perseverance fails, or at least the perfection of obedience. One cannot obey lovingly and cheerfully as long as such repugnance exists. Promptitude fails, and readiness as when one doubts whether it is good or not to do what is commanded. That renowned simplicity of blind obedience fails. Humility fails, for although on the one hand we submit, on the other we prefer ourselves to the superior. Fortitude in difficult tasks fails, and in a word all the perfections of this virtue.⁵¹

He also explains the sufferings of the heart due to the lack of the third degree. “When one obeys without submitting one’s judgment, there arise dissatisfaction, pain, reluctance, slackness, murmurings, excuses, and other imperfections and obstacles of no small moment which strip obedience of its value and merit. (... St. Bernard, calls it) not the true virtue of patience, but a cloak for your malice. (He joins St. Paul who earnestly exhorts all) to think and say the same thing (...)”⁵² to build unity by the union of judgment and will that they shall be preserved. “(In this way becoming a living holocaust most pleasing to His Divine Majesty, keeping nothing whatever to himself; and also because of the difficulty overcome for love of Him in going against the natural inclination (...)”⁵³

The confirmation and conformation of intelligence help one to fight temptations and trials and persevere in the mission.

6. Means to The Third Degree

First and foremost, means to achieve is attitude of humility as Pope St Leo says, “Nothing is difficult unto the humble, and nothing hard unto the meek.”⁵⁴ So that, God our Lord will bestow His grace that enables one to maintain sweetly and lovingly the offering that one has made to Him. Further he offers three means to achieve the third degree of obedience. The first is that, to behold in the person of your superior Him whom you obey in man, Christ the highest

⁵⁰ The Letter 11.

⁵¹ Cf. The Letter 12.

⁵² The Letter 13.

⁵³ The Letter 14.

⁵⁴ The Letter 15.

wisdom, immeasurable goodness, and infinite charity, who, you know, cannot be deceived and does not wish to deceive you.

The second means is that you be quick to look for reasons to defend what superior commands, or to what he is inclined, rather than to disapprove of it. St. Leo says, “It is not hard to serve when we love that which is commanded.”⁵⁵ The third means is very psychological, attitudinal and exhibits deep faith. It is to presuppose and believe it as the command of God our Lord and His holy will, then to proceed blindly, without inquiry of any kind, to the carrying out of the command, with a kind of passion to obey.⁵⁶

Many complain and accuse of the “blind obedience” for it is irrational and it is too much expected of a grown-up adult. But Carlos Palmés explains that though it is named ‘blind’ it is not blind to all reasons but to those opposed to the order of the superior. “*(L)a obediencia ‘ciega’ no es ciega. Tal vez el nombre no es muy afortunado porque no se cierra los ojos a todas las razones, sino solo a aquellas que pueden dificultar la obediencia.*”⁵⁷ He further clarifies the terms ‘walking stick of an old man’ and ideal obedience of a ‘dead body’. These are not inventions of St Ignatius, but of St Francis of Assisi. These comparisons do not mean to say that the subject does not have a heart of feeling. What they emphasize is the ‘total availability’.⁵⁸ It is good to remember here the popular use of the word ‘staff’ which traditionally meant the stick of a shepherd, to mean a group of employees of a hospital, school etc. They are expected to be available and obedient to the employers.⁵⁹

7. Representation

Having said what all said above, St Ignatius, comes to an important element of ‘representation’, ‘dialogue’ or ‘proposing a difficulty’ to the superior. It is an integral element of the obedience of the third degree which demands the discretion of the subject and the superior.

But this does not mean that you should not feel free to propose a difficulty, should something occur to you different from his opinion, provided you pray over it, and it seems to you in God’s presence that you ought to make the representation to the superior. If you wish to proceed in this matter without suspicion of attachment to your own judgment, you must maintain indifference both before and after making this representation, not only as to

⁵⁵ The Letter 15.

⁵⁶ Cf. The Letter 15.

⁵⁷ C. PALMÉS, *Del discernimiento a la obediencia Ignaciana*, Centrum Ignatianum Spiritualitatis, Roma, 1988, 162.

⁵⁸ Ibid. 163. Gioia discusses ‘símbolos ignacianos’: cf. M. GIOIA, *Obediencia*, en *DHCl*, 2852-2855, 2885.

⁵⁹ Cf. <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/staff>

undertaking or relinquishing the matter in question, but you must even go so far as to be better satisfied with, and to consider as better, whatever the superior shall ordain.⁶⁰

The Oxford English Dictionary gives the following as the third meaning to the word ‘representation’. “Formal statements made to an authority, especially so as to communicate an opinion or register a protest. (It comes from) Late Middle English (in the sense ‘image, likeness’): from Old French *representation* or Latin *repraesentatio* (*n-*), from *repraesentare* ‘bring before, exhibit’”.⁶¹ In the Ignatian writings *representar* and *representación* appear in two meanings: appear like and express one’s opinion. The meaning very significant is the second, of which we deal with. “Todo esto se mantiene en el sentido del término “representar” que, por alejarse más de sus significados habituales, podemos considerar el más genuinamente ignaciano: el que adquiere en las *Constituciones* de la CJ (cf. [259.293.543.627 y 803], por ejemplo).”⁶²

The Ignatian representation can be defined as the action of manifesting to the superior one’s personal opinion of something that he has asked or ordered already, also it can be one’s new initiative apart from them. In relation to this, as the *Constitutions* mentions, one puts forth or represent motives, reasons, thoughts, motions etc. Among these terms, motions always refer to a spiritual reality, and other terms also can be taken in this sense. This means to say one feels, thinks or rationalizes something, in the presence of God, in the light of faith and with the help of grace.

En síntesis, sería el hecho de manifestar al Superior el propio parecer sobre algo. Por lo general se trataría, más en concreto, de que el jesuita le manifieste el suyo sobre algo que el Superior le haya planteado o mandado previamente, pero también podría tratarse de una iniciativa que no parte de ese punto. Acerca de lo que se expone o representa, las *Constituciones* hablan de motivos, razones, mociones, pensamientos, etc. Entre estos términos, las mociones se refieren siempre a una realidad espiritual, y los demás pueden fácilmente adquirir este sentido. Es decir, el de algo que se siente, piensa o razona en presencia de Dios; a la luz de la fe y de la asistencia de la gracia que ésta permite sentir.⁶³

It is surprising to note that Jerome Nadal, the ambassador of Ignatius to the whole of the Society in his *pláticas* on the obedience, on different occasions and in different places, never mentions this point of representation. Often he discusses most of the characteristics of the obedience in other topics. May be, he considered that the representation was not the need of that context.⁶⁴

Also equally surprising to note its absence in many dictionaries of spirituality. To mention one,

⁶⁰The Letter 19.

⁶¹ <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/representation> - accessed on 11.06.2016. at 12.55 pm.

⁶² J. L. SÁNCHEZ-GIRÓN, *Representación*, en *GEI*, o.c., 1570-73, 1570.

⁶³ *Ibid* 1570-71.

⁶⁴ Cf. JERÓNIMO NADAL, *Las Pláticas del P. Jerónimo Nadal – Globalización ignaciana*, Mensajero-Sal Terrae, Bilbao - Santander 2011, 90-96, 320-22 y 394-95.

the famous voluminous *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité* does not have the entry on the word 'représentation'.⁶⁵ Some have a similar topic on '*objeción de conciencia*'.⁶⁶

Hugo Rahner commenting on St Ignatius' response to representations says that the more his sons progressed in the wise use of responsibility, the more he was willing to accept their criticisms and to hear their desires and suggestions.⁶⁷ This is the virtue of 'asceticism in commanding'. This is needed for a subject to follow a blind obedience. He comments further that if and when the superior lacks prudence and discretion in commanding, the subject who obeys is merely carrying out a duty or acting out of laziness that is ethically unjustifiable. This is to say the subject need to represent what is occurring to him in the given situation.

With regard to the discerning the will of God after listening to the representation from subjects, Palmés notes the role of the superior in finding through his personal discernment and in that of his brothers companions. "*El Superior ha de ser, el hombre obsesionado por seguir en toda la voluntad divina, (...) la docilidad al Espíritu Santo cuando obra en sus hermanos. Ciertamente que faltaría a su deber el Superior que buscase complacerles cuando el servicio de Dios exige lo contrario.*"⁶⁸

In the obedience, the role of the superior is very important. He has to be obsessed with seeking and finding of God's will. He needs to be docile to the Holy Spirit, working in and through his brothers. He ought to change his mind and concede to when God demands the opposite. St Ignatius who was so strict in punishing real disobedience, was all the same ready and eager to receive representations. Espinosa talks about the case of Manareo who "says that Ignatius wanted the local Superior even to be Importune in asking what they deemed necessary or very useful for their houses." But once Manareo after mature consideration, he acted in a way different from that ordered by Ignatius and "he told Ignatius that he, had done it 'considering as if you were present and approved it'. Ignatius told him he did rightly and always to use his discretion in executing orders."⁶⁹

⁶⁵ Cf. A.A. V.V., *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité Ascétique et Mystique Doctrine et Histoire*, Beauchesne, Paris 1982.

⁶⁶ A. HAMMAN, *Objeción de conciencia*, en BERARALINO, ANGELO DI., (ED.), *Diccionario Patristico y de la Antigüedad Cristiana*, Sigueme, Salamanca 1992, 1569-70.

⁶⁷ Cf. J. A. BRACKEN, "Jesuit Spirituality from a Process Perspective": *Studies in the Spirituality Jesuits* 22 (1990) 1-36.

⁶⁸ C. PALMÉS, o.c., 65.

⁶⁹ PIERRE BLET, o.c., 167.

7.1 Representation is not confrontation

Commenting on representation De Aldama clarifies that the Ignatian representation is not confrontation which means suggestions, new ideas or a contrasting opinion. It is a humble sharing of one's interior self at the given hour with regard the mission at hand or yet to be given or a new venture. Main purpose of the *manifestation of conscience* is to help the superior decide the mission.

The *Exercises* assume that "interior motions" and "thoughts" can result from the activity of various spirits and can be a means of discovering the will of God for a soul. "Representing"-something far different from what is nowadays called "confrontation" - has no suggestion of opposition or contrast. It simply means sharing humbly with the superior "the reasons or inconveniences which appear to the subject, not inclining him one way or another, so that afterwards he can follow the way that will be shown to him with peace of mind" and "submitting his entire judgment and will to that of his superior," who is "in the place of Christ" ([627]). One of the reasons, and perhaps the main one, given in the Examen for the necessity of the account of conscience is that the superior will be able to decide better about missions through his knowledge of these interior motions and inclinations ([92]). Once in the place of the mission, it is the duty of the one sent, as the Constitutions indicate indirectly, to inform the superior "about the entire outcome" ([629]).⁷⁰

7.2 Example of St Ignatius

The *Constitutions* mention very little about the representation. St Ignatius set us an example of representation in the episode of 'Claudio Jayo y el Obispado de Trieste'⁷¹ and then that of 'Cardenalato de Francisco de Borja'⁷². He used the same reasons and sometimes same words of Jayo to represent to the Pope.

Estas mismas razones da Jayo al Papa en la carta que le dirige el 22 de diciembre. A veces con las mismas palabras. "Porque juzgamos conforme a nuestra conciencia que al tomarla (la dignidad episcopal) daríamos en tierra con la Compañía; y tanto que, si yo quisiera imaginar o conjeturar algunos medios para derrocar y destruir esta Compañía, este medio de tomar obispado sería uno de los mayores."⁷³ Es uno de los mayores medios para dar en tierra, derrocar, destruir la Compañía.⁷⁴

Moreover, Ignatius himself has left us a page of great interest on how to deal with Superiors (M.I. Epp, IX. 90-91). In this he asks his men to represent the matter discerned in a detached manner. Following is a redaction of the translation of the letter.⁷⁵

⁷⁰ ANTONIO M. DE ALDAMA, S.J., *The Constitutions*..., 256.

⁷¹ MI, 1,451. Quoted in A. ALBURQUERQUE, "Ignacio decide por el segundo tiempo de elección "estorbar" el cardenalato de Borja": *Manresa* 63 (1991) 501-524. 504-505.

⁷² FN, I, 745-751. FN, IV, 445-447. MI, 1, 444. Quoted in A. ALBURQUERQUE, 509-510.

⁷³ MI, 1,451. Quoted in A. ALBURQUERQUE, 504-505.

⁷⁴ A. ALBURQUERQUE, 502.

⁷⁵ Cf. WILLIAM J. YOUNG, 390-392.

1. When anyone has some business to transact with the Superior he must present it clearly after due consideration by himself and consultation with others depending on its importance. In matters which are less important or possibly so urgent that it is not possible to consider or discuss them at leisure, let him use his good sense to decide without long deliberation whether it ought to be presented to the Superior.
2. Once he has thus thought out and weighed the matter, let him propose it to the Superior in these or similar terms. "I have considered this matter by myself – or consulted with others – and it seems to me – or we think – that it would be good to do this or that". Let him never say to a Superior "this or that is so" but rather say tentatively "it may be so..."
3. After the matter has thus been proposed the Superior will decide or take the time to reflect, or refer it back to him or those who had examined it, or even have other people examine it and decide on it, according to the importance or difficulty of the matter.
4. If the person, on receiving the decision of the Superior has made some representation which appears to him suitable, let him offer no further objection if the Superior insists on his decision.
5. If after the decision has been taken by the Superior, the person should think that a different decision would be better, or at least has serious doubts on the matter, after two or three hours, or on the following, he may once again take up the matter with the Superior and propose that this or that might be a better course. Let him however speak in such a way as to avoid giving the impression of contradicting or offending the Superior and let him accept the decision which will eventually be taken.
6. When that has been done, even if the decision has been thus once or twice reaffirmed, at the end of a month or some longer time, he can again present this issue to the Superior because time and experience can often change one's perception of things, or bring out new aspects of the matter.
7. Let him also take account of the disposition of the Superior, speak directly and clearly and at a suitable time whenever that is possible.

7.3 Representation is not democratization

Sánchez-Girón cautions us that the representation does not make the governing or the decision making in the Society a democratic process. Subjects or the community cannot take up the roll of the superior.

Con todo, no sería acertado limitarse a valorar la representación como un elemento que contribuye a democratizar el gobierno de la CJ, en el sentido meramente político del término. No supone un trato entre iguales (la reverencia que se pide al jesuita en los textos comentados hablan de ello) ni una paridad de funciones en esa búsqueda conjunta de la voluntad de Dios. No hace que se desdibujen los perfiles propios del Superior y el subdito de la CJ, y mucho menos que éste tome el puesto del aquél. Que el gobierno de la Orden sea espiritual no quita para que las decisiones las tome el Superior según su discernimiento, y la representación no altera este punto. Como dispone el mencionado [292] de las *Constituciones*, el jesuita deberá confiar enteramente en él la cuestión cada vez que represente, "teniendo por mejor lo que ordenare [...] (ahora conceda lo que se pide, ahora no);⁷⁶

⁷⁶ J. L. SÁNCHEZ-GIRÓN, SJ, *Representación*, 1573.

Through this act of representation what one seeks not one's own personal interest but the accuracy in the given mission and it is a channel to express if anything goes against one's conscience. "Lo que se busca con ello no es la afirmación de la autonomía ni el interés personal, sino el acierto en la misión. (...) Pero es un cauce posible y relativamente habitual, previo a lo que sería la objeción de conciencia, concepto más moderno que implica la convicción de que el mandato recibido implica pecado."⁷⁷

8. Conclusion

Ignatius concludes the letter taking them back to the foundation of the holy virtue of obedience. He implores them for the love of Christ our Lord "who not only gave us the precept of obedience, but added His example, to make every effort to attain it by a glorious victory over yourselves, vanquishing the loftiest and most difficult part of yourselves, your will and understanding (...)"⁷⁸

Thus, for Ignatius, the obedience is to Jesus Christ, our Lord and the Creator. In the Superior one has to see and obey Him. The first kind of the obedience of execution is not worthy to be called obedience. The second kind, that of will is better still not yet purer. The most perfect is the third kind, that of intellect in which one has the mind of the Superior in fulfilling the order. Of course, when one is moved deeply to express something with regard to the order given, one can represent the matter after due consideration in prayer and discernment. After making the representation he leaves the matter to the Superior to decide, without influencing him neither directly nor indirectly through someone else.

The faithful presentation of these ideals of obedience to the candidates is the first step in forming them in it. This text extends an invitation to look into their personal idea of the obedience from the perspective of each one's unique context. Every point splits and spears into different layers and dimension of human reality making one to come alive in full freedom to obedience – a choice made in and through discernment.

Having presented the general overall understanding of Ignatian Obedience, in the following chapter let us study the understanding of obedience in general in the Bible. Its formation in and through the life experiences of Biblical personalities in the Old and the New Testament.

⁷⁷ L. M. GARCÍA DOMÍNGUEZ, "Aportación ignaciana a la obediencia consagrada": *Manresa* 87 (2015) 283-293, 293.

⁷⁸ The Letter 20.

Chapter 2

Obedience in the Bible

The Bible as a source and record of divine revelation and human responses to the revelation, has a lot to offer to the way of life of all believers especially of Semitic revealed religions. The Christian way of life very much emerges from it as experienced and handed over by tradition. In this chapter, let us approach this great fountain with reverence and academic rigour to see the sources of the practice of obedience. This virtue and practice of obedience has nurtured the religion with a great wisdom. In this chapter the paper intends to find some answers and clarifications to some of the following questions. What is obedience according to the books of the holy scripture? What was its origin and how was it established in God-human history? What is the role of God in this enterprise? How was it lived out in the Old Testament and in the New Testament? How was it transformed into obedience to Law that was foundation of religion and ethics? How did Jesus live out in his life time as a faithful Jew and *Rabi*? What was his understanding of obedience to the Law? How did the early Christians see it? What was the teaching of Apostles regarding obedience an authority? How do they see and interpret the life of Jesus as that of obedience to the will of the Father? Are there any closer biblical references and foundation for Ignatian idea of obedience and representation?

Let us begin with the word meaning and its roots. Hebrew word used for 'obey' in the Old Testament is '*shema*' pronounced as '*Shmah*'. It also means 'hear'. It is a very common word used in ordinary expression of speaking and hearing. Biblical scholars observe that translators are constantly faced with the problem of when to translate 'shema' by "hear" and when by

“obey.” “Obedecer significa escuchar la manifestación de la voluntad ajena y darle respuesta. La obediencia es subordinada y acción: Gn 22,18; Ex 15,26; 23,22; Dt 5,31-33; Is 1,19; Jr 7,13; Mt 7,21; Mc 3,35; Jn 12,47; Rom 2,13; Sant 1,22.25.”⁷⁹ Since the God of the Bible comes through the voice of spoken word, the word ‘hear’ has an important significance.

Para hablar de obediencia y obedecer el hebreo bíblico utiliza el verbo ‘*sama*’ escuchar. No existe en esta lengua una raíz propia, específica, que signifique obedecer. Esto no debe extrañar porque en castellano obedecer proviene de *obedire* que deriva de *audire*, oír. Este fenómeno se repite en el griego clásico y tiene particular importancia en el griego bíblico, pues el verbo *hypakoúo*, obedecer, tiene en su composición al verbo *akoúo*, escuchar, oír. *Hypakoúo* es el verbo que emplea la Biblia griega para traducir ordinariamente al hebreo *sama*. En la Biblia estos verbos con significado de escuchar tienen particular relevancia, porque Dios viene al encuentro del ser humano, la mayoría de las veces, por la palabra.⁸⁰

1. In the Old Testament

This word ‘hear’ – ‘obey’ signifies divine human relationship. The context of God’s free initiative to reveal Godself to humanity and to communicate with humans is very important to enter into the dynamism of deep relationship and thus into the meaning and all that is signified by obedience.

While the term is used in the OT to express such action in ordinary human relationships, it is the relationship between God and man or more specifically God and Israel—which provides the proper context for understanding its full meaning. The basic presupposition is that God has revealed himself to Israel through his “word” or his “voice” (Gen. 27:8; Exod. 19:5; Deut. 28:12; Jer. 7:23).⁸¹

In the Old Testament, obedience to the authority of Yahweh was exercised within terms of the Covenant, whose content was embraced by the formula: “You shall be my people, and I shall be your God” (Jer 11.4; Hos 2.25; Jer 7.23; 24.7). Under the Covenant, the people assumed the obligation of fulfilling the Law. This, according to the broader concept of Deuteronomy and the Psalms, was the summit of divine revelation, considered as a norm of life.⁸²

Thus, the understanding of obedience in the Old Testament is covenant centered. We could say, with all its positive connotations, that the *Torah*, *Nabim* and *Ketubim* are intoxicated with, immersed in, abound with, bubbling with the idea of obedience to the precepts of the covenant.

⁷⁹ A. STOGER, *Obediencia- Sagrada Escritura* en HEINRICH FRIES, *Conceptos Fundamentales de la Teología*, Tomo II, Ediciones Cristiandad, Madrid ²1979, 159-163, 159.

F. SCHOLZ, *Obediencia-Teología* en HEINRICH FRIES, *Conceptos Fundamentales de la Teología*, Tomo II, Ediciones Cristiandad, Madrid ²1979, 163-168.

⁸⁰ J. L. ESPINEL, *Obediencia – Fundamentación Bíblica* en AA. VV., *Diccionario Teológico de la Vida Consagrada*, Publicaciones Claretianas, Madrid 1989, 1171-1181, 1171.

M. Á. ASIAÍN, *Obediencia – Lectura Teológica* en AA. VV., *Diccionario Teológico de la Vida Consagrada*, Publicaciones Claretianas, Madrid 1989, 1181-1203, 1181.

⁸¹ F. W. YOUNG, *Obedience*, in AA. VV., *New Interpreter’s Dictionary of Bible*, Abdington Press, Nashville 1992, ISBN 0-687-19270-6, CD version. O 10-12, 10.

⁸² K. V. TRUHLAR, *Obedience* in AA. VV., *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C. ²2003. 502-507, 502.

God Almighty comes in search of the enslaved masses of Israel remembering the covenant He made with their ancestors. This eruption of divine power in the history of Israel made a profound impact. Celebration and remembrance of this great event in day to day actions from dawn to dusk in homes, public places and religious places became obedience to the precepts of the covenant.

1.1 God's initiative

God spoke to Israel through chosen persons from the people. They hail from different category of people. God fulfills the mission through the participation and collaboration of the chosen spokes-person. God inspires chosen ones to raise themselves above to see their context, situation, space and time with the eyes of faith and hear the word of God for the same. People forget. As in the parable of sower (Mt 13: 1-23) the thorns of worries of daily life crush the plant.

When God speaks, he does so through his chosen representatives, a patriarch or judge (Judg. 2:17), prophet, priest (Deut. 17:12), king (I Kings 10:6), etc. His word not only reveals what he purposes to do, but also points to that action whereby he is already fulfilling or is about to fulfil his purpose. Indeed, the one through whom God declares his word is already made participant in his action.⁸³

Those persons understand and fulfil the will of God. God is with them in the mission. God is present in the process of revelation as the one who reveals and with the listener one who inspires. Then, God moves the primary listener to announce the word to another individual or a group of people. In this action God is as source of inspiration and the spoken word.

Abraham fully understands God's word that he should sacrifice his son when, in the act of sacrificing, God acts to provide the lamb (Gen. 22:1 -19). Moses fully understands God's word to lead the Israelites out of Egypt (Exod. 5:1) when, in the act of leading, God brings the plagues on Egypt (chs. 8 ff) and separates the waters of the sea (ch. 14). Jeremiah understands God's word of judgment on Judah as he hears the snorting horses (Jer. 8:16).⁸⁴

1.2 To hear means to fulfill

The word hear means not only the simple action of hearing but a group of three actions namely hearing, understanding and putting into practice in one's life. The dictum of 'pay heed to the elders' means the compound process of these three actions. "En la Biblia, obedecer no es, pues,

⁸³ F. W. YOUNG, 10.

⁸⁴ F. W. YOUNG, 10.

un derivado del verbo oír, sino una de sus acepciones. Se trata de un oír especial, con profundidad, con adhesión, un escuchar al espíritu, un abrir los oídos.”⁸⁵

To “hear” God’s word involves a single response that can be described from three different standpoints. First, it is a word which always involves the physical sense of hearing, since God fulfils his purposes in and through human beings. Second, to understand what one hears demands that the hearer respond in faith and trust in God’s word and action. Third, such response involves the hearer in obedient action to fulfil God’s intention for his part in the divine action. To understand the ambiguity of the word “hear” is necessary to grasping the full meaning of the word.⁸⁶

Therefore, to hear a person’s word means to put into action. In the case of the Bible it is hearing God’s word that is to do it in one’s life. The books of the Bible are full of historical events of hearing and not hearing God’s word, in other words, obeying and not obeying God.

To really hear God’s word inevitably involves one in an obedient response in action prompted by faithfulness to and faith in the God who is revealing himself in and through particular historical events. Not to respond in obedient action is tantamount to unbelief--and so the prophet chastises his people for their blind eyes and deaf ears (Isa. 6:9 -10), which betray their faithlessness. The inevitable consequence of failing to hear is rebellion or disobedience. But rebellion is not just the willful disobedience of one who has heard. Rebellion is the sign that one has not really heard, since to hear implies a faith-obedience response. The history of Israel can be treated as the story of Israel’s hearing or failure to hear God’s word. In the early period of her history God speaks to Israel through appointed leaders, through whom God makes covenants - the climactic covenant being established through Moses in the giving of the law with its demands and promises.⁸⁷

1.3 Covenant demands obedience

Through prophets God did not give newer commandments. However, He called them to faithfulness to the covenant. The relationship between God and Israel is marked by the covenant. This demands obedience to the precepts of the covenant. It is the required condition for the promise to be fulfilled. “La obediencia ocupa una posición central en la religión revelada. La alianza, con la cual se designa la relación de Dios con Israel, exige obediencia a los preceptos de la alianza (Gn 17,9s; Ex 24,7s). La obediencia constituye el requisito para el cumplimiento de las promesas de la alianza (Ex 15,26; Lv 20,22ss; Dt 28,1-14.15-69).”⁸⁸

The prophets condemned the evil ways of the Israel and warned them of the possible destruction, namely exile, in case of failure to abide by the law of God.

In the prophets God speaks anew to Israel, condemning her rebellion, calling her to faithful remembrance and obedient action in each new historical situation. Amos repeatedly says: “Hear

⁸⁵ J. L. ESPINEL, 1171.

⁸⁶ F. W. YOUNG, 10.

⁸⁷ F. W. YOUNG, 11.

⁸⁸ A. STOGER, 159.

this word” ([Jer]3:1; 4:1; 5:1; 8:4). Jeremiah reminds his people: “But this command I gave them, ‘Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be my people; and walk in all the way that I command you, that it may be well with you’” (Jer. 7:23).⁸⁹

However, God understood the evil inclination of human hearts and wanted to make the new covenant be written not on the tablet but in their hearts. “En la nueva y perfecta alianza, el mismo Dios escribirá la ley en los corazones y concederá la voluntad de obediencia (Jr 31,31-34; Ez 36,26s; Is 59,21).”⁹⁰

1.4 Law - Foundation of religion and ethics

The morality basically consists in obeying the will of God expressed in and through the precepts of the covenantal laws. Conscious rebellion against the authority of God is considered as sin. God demands a total surrender. The most acceptable cult to God is none other than obedience. This idea repeatedly appears in the Scripture.

La moralidad consiste esencialmente en la obediencia a la voluntad de Dios, la cual se manifiesta en la palabra revelada. El pecado se concibe como el acto consciente y responsable por el cual se rebela el hombre contra la autoridad divina para disponer soberanamente y poner el don de Dios al servicio de su propio yo (Gn 3,1-7; 1 Sm 15,23,26). Dios exige una entrega total (Os 9,17). El culto resulta agradable a Dios sólo cuando es expresión de la obediencia (1 Sm 15,22; Sal 40,7-9; Jr 7,21-28).⁹¹

Thus the Law was the foundation of religion, of ethics, and, because of the theocratic constitution of the people, of civil life in Israel (1 Sm 8.7–9; 10.19). Hence the insistence upon a knowledge of the Law, and upon conformity of life to its demands (Ex 13.8–9; Dt 33.10; Lv 10,11; Hos 4.6; Prv 19.16; Sir 19.17; 21.11; Wis 6.18). Psalm 119 is a canticle of praise of the beauty and blessing of the Law, which is no insupportable yoke laid upon the shoulders of men (cf. Acts 15.10), but refreshment to the soul, joy to the heart, and light to the eyes (Ps 19.8–9); it is sweeter than honey (Ps 119.103); it is the theme of the song of the people in their place of exile (*ibid.* v. 54). Just as the lot of the first parents depended upon the command of Yahweh (Gn 2.16–17), so the efficacy of the Covenant and the promises attached to it depended upon the obedience of the people to the Law (Ex 19.5; Jer 11.2–5). For this reason, Yahweh watched jealously over its fulfillment (Ex 20.5; Dt 28.15–19; Jer 11.2–5). Obedience is worth more than sacrifice (1 Sm 15.22; Eccl 4.12).⁹²

The total history of the Old Testament can be summarized in terms of obedience. “Según la concepción deuteronomista de la historia, todo acontecimiento se reduce al dócil cumplimiento o al desprecio desobediente de la palabra divina (Dt 1-4). Según la doctrina sapiencial, el temor de Dios y el cumplimiento de sus mandatos son el todo del hombre (Ecl 12,13).”⁹³ When the

⁸⁹ F. W. YOUNG, 11.

⁹⁰ A. STOGER, 159.

⁹¹ A. STOGER, 159.

⁹² K. V. TRUHLAR, 502.

⁹³ A. STOGER, 159.

people returned from exile their primary occupation and preoccupation was to remind themselves of the texts of the Law and the prophets.

One of the major themes of postexilic Judaism is that Israel had failed to hear Moses and the prophets. When the returned exiles had been settled, one of the first acts of Ezra was to read the “book of the law of Moses” to all “who could hear *with understanding*” (Neh. 8:1 -2). As late as the book of Daniel the relentless charge is made: “We ... have not obeyed the voice of the LORD our God by following his laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets” (Dan. 9:10).⁹⁴

Kings are chosen by God and anointed to be God’s servant. So they deserve the same obedience as to God. The obedience to King is integral part of the precepts.

Obedience to Yahweh included obedience to the civil authority, which derived its power from God (Wis 6.13). The king was chosen by God (Dt 17.14; 1 Sm 8.22; 10.1; 10.24; 16.13; 2 Sm 7.18); he was the son of God (2 Sm 7.14); he was helped by God (2 Sm 7.3); was anointed by Yahweh (1 Sm 24.10; Ps 89.39); was sacrosanct (1 Sm 24.10; 2 Sm 1.14); and was to be feared as Yahweh Himself (Prv 24.21).⁹⁵

In the days after the prophetic era, the people of Israel as Jewish religion shifted its attention to the strict adherence to the cultic, ritualistic and moralistic interpretation and following of the law. This was the time when Jesus appeared in the history of Israel and of the world. The covenant precepts were amplified into a big jungle of minute details of human customs and traditions. In the long run the covenant had lost its sense, only customs remained.

After the close of the prophetic period the Jews directed their attention increasingly to the law as the revealed word of God. There developed, then, a tendency to understand faith-obedience in moralistic and legalistic terms. The NT presupposes the OT understanding of obedience. The usual term is *ὑπακοή*, but, again, “to hear” (*ἀκούω*) often means “to obey.”⁹⁶

2. Obedience in the New Testament

As we have seen above, in the Old Testament the people of Israel enters into relationship through the covenant. In the New Testament the covenant is renewed through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Jesus gives the new commandment. He makes his followers new creation of new commandment of love and charity. The whole of the New Testament by its allegiance to this new commandment of charity is reducible to obedience. In the following pages let us see the obedience in the life and teaching of Jesus and in the writings of the evangelists and apostles.

[T]he Christian is made a “new creation” (Gal 6.15), who ought to walk in a newness of life (Rom 6.4), living in “obedience to faith” (Rom 1.5, 16.26), living not to himself but to God (Rom 5.11, 14.7–8), under the “new covenant” (Mt 26.28; 2 Cor 3.6), under the new commandment of charity (Jn 13.34). As an all-embracing principle, this commandment

⁹⁴ F. W. YOUNG, 11.

⁹⁵ K. V. TRUHLAR, 502-503.

⁹⁶ F. W. YOUNG, 11.

contains in itself virtually the whole content of the Christian life (Mt 22.40); it includes the fulfillment of the other commandments (Gal 5.14); it sums them up (Rom 13.9); it is the fulfillment of the Law (Rom 13.10). Thus the whole of the New Testament also is, by the commandment of charity, reducible to obedience.⁹⁷

2.1 Jesus – the continuity of the Old Testament

Jesus used the word ‘hear’ in the Old Testament sense of the term. He too insisted the triple fold meaning of the word ‘hear’, that is to hear, understand and fulfill in one’s life.

In the characteristic word of Jesus: “He who has ears to hear, let him hear,” the word “hear” bears the full meaning of [Shema] in the OT. He was not only asking people to hear his word in the physical sense, but that in faithful response they accept his word as a word from God and act in obedience to it. “Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house upon the rock” (Matt. 7:24). As in the OT, to “hear” involved the hearer in the belief that Jesus was chosen of God to be the bearer of his word and that in his ministry God’s action was already revealed. The sign that men had heard was repentance and belief in the good news of the kingdom (Mark 1:14 -15).⁹⁸

The preaching and interpretation of Law by Jesus was to fulfil it, not to destroy it as some of the Jewish officials accused him of. The revelation done in and by Jesus affirmed the importance of the obedience. He announced the reign of God. He himself became the supreme expression of obedience. The prayer of ‘Our Father in heaven ...’ finds its fullness in the life of Jesus. The Holy name of God is sanctified as His holy will is fulfilled on the earth as it is in heaven in the life of Jesus. The disciples, as they preached the Gospel, they obeyed Jesus.

La revelación hecha por Jesucristo ha reforzado la importancia que corresponde a la obediencia. La predicación del reino de Dios por parte de Jesús lleva la obediencia a su última expresión. La santificación del nombre de Dios, la venida de su reino y el cumplimiento de su voluntad “así en la tierra como en el cielo” son una sola cosa (Mt 6,9-13). Para entrar en el reino de Dios se requiere el cumplimiento de la ley que Jesús promulga y explica (Mt 5,21-48). La consumación del reino de Dios se realizará cuando todo quede sometido de modo que Dios sea todo en todas las cosas (1 Cor 15,28). Como el reino de Dios comienza por obra de Jesús, la obediencia a Dios se convierte en la obediencia a Jesús en la predicación del reino. Jesús es obedecido por los demonios (Mc 1,24ss; 5,12), las enfermedades y hasta la misma muerte (Mc 5,41). Llama y exhorta a su imitación personal y exige de sus discípulos que ajusten su propia voluntad a la de él (Mc 8,34-38). Los verdaderos discípulos de Cristo cumplen la voluntad del Padre (Mt 7,21; Mc 3,31-35).⁹⁹

Jesus surrendered his total life to the will of God. He fulfilled the law in all his actions. (cf. Mt 5,17; Lc 2,49; 4,16; Jn 2, 13; 10,22s; Mc 11,11; Mt 17,24ss). He considered his life is unfurling according to the will of God in the realization of the reign of God (cf. Mt 26,52ss; 9,22; 13,33; 24,26.44). However, his life and preaching was opposed by the official religion and considered

⁹⁷ K. V. TRUHLAR, 503.

⁹⁸ F. W. YOUNG, 11.

⁹⁹ A. STOGER, 159-60.

as rebellious, thanks to his deeper search and radical interpretation of the law and its fulfilment. The religious leaders were not prepared to receive that and did not hear him to obey him.

While Jesus called men to obedience to the good news of the kingdom, he did not see his message as contradicting the obedience called for in the Law (Mark 10:17 ff). Nevertheless, his own understanding of God's voice led him to an interpretation of the specific demands of the law which conflicted with the interpretation of others (Mark 2:23 -28; 7:1-23; 10:1-12). This meant that his word was hard to "hear," not only because of Jesus' rigorous demands, but also because it implied an immediate awareness of a revelatory word of God in Jesus' words and ministry. Only those who had received the secret of the kingdom could understand (Mark 4:11 -12); others did not *really* "hear." Obedience to his words presupposed believing and trusting him in his mission.¹⁰⁰

2.2 Obedience and early Christians

The biblical understanding of obedience grows gradually, it reaches its finest nuances in the preaching and the life of Jesus. The New Testament realizes that the perfect example of obedience is Jesus in and through his life and preaching. We could put it this way, that New Testament is enticed with the docile obedience of Jesus Christ to the will of God for the salvation. The early Church further developed it in and through its life. Obedience which is faith-response is now well crystalized in the belief in the Gospel, that is in Jesus Christ in his incarnation, passion, death and resurrection. The theology of the New Testament which is well founded in obedience was in the making.

The earliest Christian community was confident that God had spoken anew through Jesus Christ. In Acts, Peter says: "Men of Israel, hear these words" (2:22). The crucial center of the message was the death and resurrection of Jesus, who was now fully manifest as Messiah. The sign of hearing was repentance in faith (6:7). Hearing or obedience was the faith-response to the gospel, now understood as a decisive word of God spoken through the death and resurrection of Jesus. Paul refers to the response to the gospel of the Galatian Christians as "hearing with faith" (Gal. 3:2). The word translated "hearing" refers both to that which is heard and to the hearing itself. Paul's apostleship to the Gentiles is for the bringing about of the "obedience to the faith" (Rom. 1:5;). Hearing or obedience, then, is used in the closest relationship to faith, not as two distinct acts, but as one and the same response. "Faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ"¹⁰¹ (Rom. 10:17).

2.3 Apostles and obedience

The apostles in their preaching and writings they reflected upon the life of Jesus. Their reflections unanimously eulogize the obedience of Jesus. St Paul saw the incarnation of Jesus as an act of obedience which played an antidote to the disobedience of Adam which caused fall, sin and death in the world. This obedience raised Jesus to the rank of the 'Lord'. It became the cause of the salvation. "Esta obediencia es el fundamento histórico-salvífica de la elevación

¹⁰⁰ F. W. YOUNG, 11.

¹⁰¹ F. W. YOUNG, 11.

de Jesucristo al rango de Kyrios (Flp 2,11). Pablo ve la encarnación a la luz de la obediencia (Gál 4,4). Jesús se somete a la ley para liberar a aquellos que se encuentran bajo la ley. La desobediencia de Adán trajo la ruina a los hombres; la obra de la obediencia de Jesús, su muerte, es la causa de la salvación (Rom 5,19).¹⁰²

He also defined the faith in terms of obedience as ‘faith is the obedience to the proclamation of the message of salvation’. The aim of the proclamation of the Good News of the apostle is none other than the obedience of gentile to the Gospel and to totally follow Christ’s obedience. “El hombre recibe la salvación mediante la ‘obediencia de la fe’ (Rom 1,5). La fe es la obediencia a la predicación del mensaje de la salvación (Rom 10,16; 2 Cor 7,15; 2 Tes 1,8). El fin de la predicación apostólica es la obediencia de los paganos (Rom 15,18), el cautivar todo pensamiento a la obediencia de Cristo (2 Cor 10,5).¹⁰³

Thus, he defined a Christian as the one who obeys the Good News of our Lord Jesus Christ, the truth. Christians glorify God in their obedience to the Good News. They are sons and daughters of obedience. They are sustained and defined by their obedience. “Cristiano es el hombre que se muestra obediente al evangelio de nuestro Señor Jesucristo (2 Tes 1,8), el que obedece a la verdad (Rom 2,8; Gál 5,7), el que glorifica a Dios en la obediencia de su confesión en favor del evangelio de Cristo (2 Cor 9,13). Los cristianos son hijos de la obediencia (cf. 1 Pe 1,14.22), sustentados y definidos por ella (Flp 2,12).¹⁰⁴

In the book of Hebrew, obedience finds a very extensive treatment to stimulate the Christian community to an intense life in Christ. Conversion and obedience are interconnected. The life of Christ, the high priest, from birth to sacrificial death, is presented as a life of obedience. The Christian community that is in pilgrimage in this world in search of ‘the sabbatical rest’ and reign of God must obey the word of God through faith.

Se describe a Jesús como sumo sacerdote. Su encarnación se considera un acto de obediencia (10,5-10; cf. Sal 40,7). Su obediencia en la aceptación de la pasión es el camino para el sacerdocio «según el orden de Melquisedec», para el perfecto sacerdocio eterno (5,7-10). Jesús consume su sacrificio en la entrega de sí mismo (9,14). Por su acto de obediencia se hace el mediador y el garante de la nueva alianza y consigue la salvación para aquellos que le obedecen (5,9). La desobediencia trae consigo la perdición (2,2). El pueblo de Dios, que camina hacia el descanso sabático de Dios, debe ser un pueblo obediente a la palabra de Dios (4,9). El evangelio, que exige obediencia, quiere hablar a aquellos que obedecen mediante la fe (4,3). La desobediencia desvía del fin (4,6.11).¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² A. STROGER, 160.

¹⁰³ A. STROGER, 160 - 161.

¹⁰⁴ A. STROGER, 161.

¹⁰⁵ A. STROGER, 161.

The theology of John has obedience as a strong pillar in the life of Jesus, the truth, the light, the love and the revelation of God. Jesus, who shares in the divinity of God, expressed his filial obedience to His Father in fulfilling His will. He not only speaks on his own accord, but also on behalf of the mission entrusted to him by the Father. His passion witnessed his love for God the Father. The disciples of Jesus must fulfill the will of the Father, as Jesus himself fulfilled, through obedience.

Jesús ha venido a hacer la voluntad del Padre (4,34; 6,38). El no habla sólo por propio impulso, sino por obediencia a la misión encomendada por el Padre (9,4; 10,18; 12,49; 15,10; 17,4). Jesús prueba su amor al Padre aceptando por obediencia la pasión (14,31). Los discípulos de Jesús deben cumplir, como él mismo, los mandatos del Padre (15,10). Ellos han de conseguir la salvación mediante la obediencia (14,15.23). (...) Para Juan, que define la esencia de Dios como amor (1 Jn 4,8), la obediencia es manifestación y obra del amor (Jn 14, 21; 15,10).¹⁰⁶

2.4 Obedience reflected as morality

The same idea from the letters of Sts Paul and Peter, forms the base for a moral life of the Christians.

In the NT obedience is understood as faith-response to God's word in Jesus Christ, with special emphasis on Christ's own obedience (Phil. 2:8; Heb. 5:8). Whereas Adam and all men sin and are disobedient, Christ alone was truly obedient (Rom. 5:18 -21). And it is through his obedience that believers receive righteousness and eternal life (Rom. 5:1; Heb. 5:9). Christians are "obedient children" (I Pet. 1:14), since through faith in Christ they share in the benefits of his obedience, and also in their lives of faith they act in obedience to him (Rom. 6:16; II Cor. 10:5 -6; I Pet. 1:22).¹⁰⁷

Further, it reflects that the obedience is not merely submission of the will to the precepts and commandments. It is living in obedience to the Spirit. The Spirit makes us 'hear with faith'. "The life of obedience is not primarily the submission of the will to laws, either of the Old Covenant or of the New. It is life lived in obedience to the Spirit, which has made the "hearing with faith" a possibility (Gal. 3:2 -5). Believers are "sanctified by the Spirit for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood" I Pet. 1:2)."¹⁰⁸

This life of obedience to the Spirit is expressed in their ethical conduct of the Christians. All good conducts of religious, social and moral nature flow from the Spirit.

Obedience understood from the standpoint of ethical conduct is first and foremost the "fruit of the Spirit" (Gal. 5:22), which is the "fruit of righteousness" that is through Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:11 ff). "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me," says the Gospel of John (10:27). But they do this as the Spirit speaks (John 14:25-26; 16:12-15). It is the obedience of the "heart" that leads to righteousness (Rom. 6:16 -19). Obedience, as in the OT, is both a

¹⁰⁶ A. STOGER, 161-162.

¹⁰⁷ F. W. YOUNG, 11.

¹⁰⁸ F. W. YOUNG, 11.

religious and an ethical term. This is also true of disobedience, which at one and the same time refers to faithlessness and to the immoral acts which are its outward signs (Acts 19:19; Rom. 11:31; Tit. 1:16; 3:3; I Pet. 4:17).¹⁰⁹

2.5 Obedience to Civil Authority

The New Testament insists obedience to humans who hold positions to command, rule and guide the people be within a family, temple or in civic society. The reason for this insistence is that all authority comes from God. This obedience is valid as long as the authority is not against God and His precepts. Jesus in his life time often posed with the question of obedience to the rulers and chief priests. In every instance, affirmed the supreme authority of God, as he did when he taught his disciple and the people saying, “The scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat. So you must be careful to do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach” (Mt 22.2,3).¹¹⁰

When the Pharisees asked whether it was lawful to give tribute to Caesar, by His answer, “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s” (Mt 22.21) He acknowledges the rights of civil authority so long as this does not violate the rights of God (cf. Acts 4.19; Dn 3.18). According to His words to Pilate – “Thou wouldst have no power at all over me were it not given thee from above” (Jn 19.11) - God Himself grants civil authority its power, and the lot of Christ depended upon this divine grant.¹¹¹

The instruction of the apostles on obedience to those in authorities, pagan or Christian, is based on the principle that all authorities come from God. While treating on human authority, Holy Scripture has always qualified their character as just, good and God fearing. St Paul recommends this obedience not out of fear of punishment but to be true to one’s conscience, the realm of God.

According to St. Paul, “Let everyone be subject to the higher authorities, for there exists no authority except from God, and those who exist have been appointed by God. Therefore, who resists the authority resists the ordinance of God” (Rom 13.1–2). Since the following verses discuss rulers who are a terror not to the good but to the evil, commending the good and as God’s ministers carrying the sword to execute wrath on those who do evil, it is evident that St. Paul is speaking of civil authority that does not abuse its rights. To such authority obedience must be rendered not only because of fear of punishment, but also for conscience’s sake (*ibid.* v. 5). The same holds true for the relationship of Christians toward the Roman tax-gatherers (vv. 6–7).¹¹²

St Peter, while treating on obedience to human authorities, talks about it even to the least in the chain of authority. It is considered as an integral part of freedom of children of

¹⁰⁹ F. W. YOUNG, 12.

¹¹⁰ New International version.

¹¹¹ K. V. TRUHLAR, 503.

¹¹² K. V. TRUHLAR, 503.

God to obey human civil authorities. However, apostles and the early Church was against the divine honors to kings and the emperor.

According to St. Peter, the faithful must subject themselves not only to supreme but to subordinate rulers for the sake of God (1 Pt 2.13–14). If the passages in Revelation concerning the adoration of the beast and its image (13.12–17; 14.9–11; 16.2; 20.4) are understood as referring to the Roman emperor, they do not express an attitude of hostility toward civil authority as such, but toward the paying of divine honors to the emperor. The freedom of the children of God was not to be made a pretext for rebellion against civil authority, for this freedom supposes full subjection to the will of God and to those who hold their authority from Him (Gal 5.13; Rom 6.18). Slaves were to obey their masters as they would Christ (Eph 6.5), not only the good and moderate ones, but the severe as well; harsh and unjust treatment they were to endure after the example of Christ (1 Pt 2.18–23).

2.5.1 Obedience in family

The New Testaments as the wisdom books of the Old Testament instructs women to be docile and obedient to their husbands as they would be towards Christ¹¹³ and children to their parents. It does not fail to instruct husbands and parents to administer their authority with love, care and concern and without undue roughness. Though the children love their parents and wives their husbands, their love for Christ must be more than that.

In marriage the woman was to be subject to the authority of the man (1 Cor 11.3; Eph 5.22–23; 1 Pt 3.1) as to that of the Lord (Eph 5.22), or “as is becoming in the Lord” (Col 3.18). The authority of the husband, however, should be exercised without harshness (Col 3.19; Eph 5.25–29). Children were to be subject to the authority of their parents (Col 3.20) in the Lord (Eph 6.1). Obedience to parents is a condition of happiness (Mt 15.4; 19.19) and is acceptable to God (Col 3.20; 1 Tm 5.4). But, Christ ought to be loved more than one’s parents (Mt 10.37). The authority of parents ought to be used without undue severity (Col 3.21).¹¹⁴

2.5.2 Jesus the model of authority

Jesus is the model of authority. He is the model to all hold authority and responsibility. Thus, in presenting the authority, be it in the society or family, as the head, as Jesus for the Church, demands that they be self-sacrificing.

All human authority, in fact, ought to be exercised after the example of Christ’s, who did not come to be served but to serve (Mk 10.45), and He made Himself the servant of His Disciples, although He was their Master and Lord (Jn 13.13–16). In the Christian community authority is not to be distorted into despotism, but to be considered a service (Mk 10.42; Lk 22.25). “Let him who is greatest among you become as the youngest, and him who is chief as the servant” (Lk 22.26; Mk 10.43–45). This principle is true especially for the elders who ought to feed the flock of the Lord not under constraint, but willingly, according to God; nor yet for the sake of

¹¹³ Cf. M. ADINOLFI, *Mujer en AA. VV.*, *Nuevo Diccionario de Teología Bíblica*, Ediciones Paulinas, Madrid 1990, 1279 - 1294, 1280-81.

¹¹⁴ K.V. TRUHLAR, 503.

base gain, but eagerly; nor yet as lording it over their charges, but as be coming from the heart a pattern to the flock (1 Pt 5.2–3).¹¹⁵

The instructions of apostles on obedience to masters or husbands is even if they are harsh, is not to approve the oppression of the aggressor. It is with an apostolic mission to convert them by their edifying example. Apostolic obedience takes a very concrete shape in the life of every Christian who is ‘sent’ on mission to one’s own home and work place. This change of altitude, from obeying human authority to obeying God, produces an attitudinal change in every Christian which is very conducive and easily perceivable.

3. Obedience, disobedience and representation

Prayer of intercession, pleading seeking help, protection, forgiveness for oneself and for the people whom they speak for could be compared to the representation. In vocation stories of almost every prophet, we could find some or other representation on the part of the ‘chosen one’. It may be of expressing one’s doubts, difficulty, inability, hesitation, sometimes rejecting and going away like Jonas. In every such event, God assures His presence, clarifies the theme of the mission, and facilitates the chosen one with a companion, a special power and giving another option. In some cases, they are punished for their inappropriate representation of raising doubts like that of Zechariah. Attributes of God that are compatible with, are connected to representation are numerous. God expresses His will to people, God listens cry of the needy, God changes His mind (decisions), God talks to humans individually and to a nation as the whole, God inspires persons to speak and to act on behalf of Himself. Thus, God is God of and in human history, acting in and through history.

3.1 Representation in the pre-historic time

Creation in the Bible is presented as a voluntary free and a loving act of God. God creates from His fullness of life and love. It was not a response to some other external prayer. It came from within. The desire to create came from God. It marks the beginning of everything in the world. *The New Interpreter’s Bible* commentary and Dictionary provide an explanation which brings to light the dialogic and participative nature of God’s action of creation. Some authors call the creation as vocation.¹¹⁶ The action word ‘to create’ is only of God, that is to say, the subject of

¹¹⁵ K.V. TRUHLAR, 503-504.

¹¹⁶ G. URIBARRI, “La vida cristiana como vocación”: *Miscelánea Comillas* 59, nº 115 (2001) 525-545, 526.

this verb is only God. This action makes things come into existence from nothing, ‘*creatio ex nihilo*’. God creates freely on his own accord.

In 2:18-23, God takes the human decision into account when shaping new directions for the creation. Divine decisions interact with human decisions in the creation of the world. Creation involves process as well as moment; it is creaturely as well as divine. The future stands genuinely open here. Everything depends on what the humans does with what God presents. The question of not only *how*, but indeed whether humanity *will* continue beyond this first generation remains open-ended, suspended in this creative moment. What the humans decide will determine whether there will be a next human generation.¹¹⁷

3.1.1 Sin enters humanity

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.” Gen 1:1-2. He created all things. He found that everything was good. “God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.” (Gen 1.4, 1.9, 1.12, 1.18, 1.21, 1.25, 1.31). The goodness of God was in every being. He admired at it. In the case of humans, it was short lived. The first sin episode, though retrospectively and figuratively written to explain the origin of sin, it has a lot of rich insights and inspirations that are still valuable for ultra-modern humanity.

“In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” (Gen 2.8). “And the LORD God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.” (Gen 2.16-17). It does not report any dialogue in terms of clarification regarding the tree or the prohibition to eat its fruits. “Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.” (Gen 2.25). When they were punished there was no response in terms of any representation from the part of Adam and Eve is not observed in the narration. However, in the case of Cain’s sin, he expressed his fear of being killed by anyone who would see him. So, God put sign on his forehead that would protect from other humans. “[T]he LORD said to him, “Not so; anyone who kills Cain will suffer vengeance seven times over.” Then the LORD put a mark on Cain so that no one who found him would kill him.” (Gen 4,15.)

3.2 The God of Abraham and representation

God of Abraham is presented with anthropomorphic characteristics. He is God who talks to and walks with Abraham. He associates Himself closely with the nomadic tribe of Abraham to

¹¹⁷ Commentary on Gen 2, 18-23, AA. VV., *The New Interpreter’s Bible* – A commentary in twelve volumes, Abingdon Press, Nashville 2002, Vol I. 549.

make him a great nation. Abraham in turn, by God's grace, was loyal and faithful to God. He trusted God totally. He believed he would fulfill His promises.

Abrán adoraba a un Dios personal, que acompañaba al clan durante las emigraciones y había hecho algunas promesas relativas a la descendencia y a la posesión de la tierra. Era un Dios siempre y solamente protector, que no castigaba nunca al favorito. En Canaán este Dios entró en relaciones con el Dios El, el ser supremo del panteón cananeo, conocido bajo los diversos títulos de *El-Elyón*, *El-Ólam*, *El Sadday*. Abrahán se adhirió a este Dios con lealtad y confianza.¹¹⁸

This deep personal friendship of God with Abraham and their conversation through praying and answering gives us the closest example of representation. This relationship between God and Abraham sets a new face of God. His prayers are heard, though some of his petitions and God's promise to fulfill them look very extraordinary, such as an heir in his old age and that of Sarah (cf. Gen 15,2-3). The best of this intercessory prayer which is almost like a representation of a subject to the superior, is demonstrated in the episode of Sodom and Gomora. God lets know Abraham of His decision to destroy two cities for their sins. They speak to each other face to face. God allows Abraham to dialogue with, express his feelings and preoccupation over the matter. Abraham being fully conscious of his status equal to the dust on the earth, he makes his prayer with lot of humility.

Particularmente reveladora de cómo el hombre bíblico se pone delante de Dios es la larga oración de intercesión [of representación] por Sodoma y Gomorra (Gen 18,23-32). El rasgo que más llama la atención es que Dios y el hombre están frente a frente como dos personas: hablan y discuten familiarmente. Un hombre vivo, un hombre verdadero encuentra al Dios vivo y verdadero. El polvo está ante la roca; y, sin embargo, la confianza es más fuerte que el temor y supera la distancia: "Me atrevo a hablar a mi Señor, yo que soy polvo y ceniza". Si nos preguntamos cuál es la raíz de esta insólita oración, respetuosa a la vez que confidencial, debemos responder que es la fe. Sólo de una fe profunda brota una oración atrevida. Además de familiar, la oración de Abrahán es insistente. Abrahán insiste, cortés pero firme. No pide para sí, sino que intercede por los demás. Como todos los grandes hombres de Dios, Abrahán es un intercesor.¹¹⁹

Through this prayer of intercession or representation Abraham poses a very simple question with a very deep theological implication. This brings out the real profound nature and logic of God. One just person is valued more to forgive the city than to condemn it for the sins of the rest. Therefore, prayer of intercession or representation opens a platform for a deeper search to discover the mystery of God and His will.

Abrahán le plantea a Dios un problema: "¿Vas a destruir al justo con el pecador?" En otras palabras, ¿se rige Dios por la maldad de muchos o por la justicia de pocos? ¿No podría un corto

¹¹⁸ S. VIRGULIN, *Abrahán* en AA. VV., *Nuevo Diccionario de Teología Bíblica*, Ediciones Paulinas, Madrid 1990, 24-31, 29-30.

¹¹⁹ B. MAGGIONI, *Oración* en AA. VV., *Nuevo Diccionario de Teología Bíblica*, Ediciones Paulinas, Madrid 1990, 1327-1345, 1328.

número de justos tener tanto peso que indujera a Dios a perdonar a la ciudad? Ya aquí se entrevé cómo para la Biblia la oración es el lugar privilegiado de la revelación y de la reflexión teológica, de la búsqueda y del descubrimiento del misterio de Dios.¹²⁰

An element of representation that we could draw from this episode is deep faith. The criteria of making representation is not from the human perspective but divine, His mercy, will and love for the human.

3.3 The God of Moses and representation

The God of Moses is a God of anger and wrath. He stays away from the people. Talks to Moses through thunderous voice. At the time of his call, Moses expressed his difficulties and hesitation. In and through his mission with the people of Exodus, he was tired. However, he was carrying out the entrusted mission with the same passion of God for the people of Israel. He interceded with God for the people whenever they provoked Him with their disobedience and evil behaviors. The highest of all these is the event of the golden calf.

[...] Moisés intercedió para librar al pueblo del fuego encendido por la cólera divina (Núm 11,1-2) o de las serpientes venenosas (Núm 21,4-9). Pero la intercesión más alta se dio en el caso de la culpa más grave: el “becerro de oro” (Éx 32,11-14.30-32; Dt 9,12-20) cuando, según una tradición rabínica basada en Éx 32,32, Moisés llegó a ofrecer su propia vida a cambio de la del pueblo.[...] La función de intercesor propia de Moisés va estrechamente unida a dos de los rasgos más característicos de su figura: su intimidad con Dios (cf Éx 20,21; 24,18; 32,18-19; 34,9; Núm 12,8; Dt 34,10), que llega hasta transformar la teofanía en un diálogo: “Moisés hablaba y Dios le respondía con el trueno” (Éx 19,9), y su humildad, que llega hasta no sentir ninguna envidia por el don profético de los demás (Núm 11,25-29), porque “Moisés era humilde, el hombre más humilde [...] del mundo” (Núm 12,3).¹²¹

What happened at the end of the dialogue, representation and prayer of intercession? The different versions of the Bible use various words to denote God’s response in this event: God relented, repented or changed his mind and did not bring the disaster He had planned.¹²² Biblical scholar R. Fabris observes that it was a victory of prayer of intercession. Though it appeared that God changed His mind, it is Moses who changed his idea of God. He discovered the real face of God, a face of fidelity, pardon and forgiveness. The prayer of intercession and representation converted Moses to discover the deep fountain of love even in the situation

¹²⁰ B. MAGGIONI, 1328.

¹²¹ P. STEFANI, *Moisés* en AA. VV., *Nuevo Diccionario de Teología Bíblica*, Ediciones Paulinas, Madrid 1990, 1256-1264, 1261.

¹²² *New International Version*: Then the LORD relented and did not bring on his people the disaster he had threatened. *New Living Translation*: So the LORD changed his mind about the terrible disaster he had threatened to bring on his people. *English Standard Version*: And the LORD relented from the disaster that he had spoken of bringing on his people. *New American Standard Bible*: So the LORD changed His mind about the harm which He said He would do to His people. *King James Bible*: And the LORD repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people. Taken from: biblehub.com/exodus/32-14.htm accessed on 29.09.2016 at 11.00 am.

where according to historical logic one supposed to encounter sin, punishment and condemnation.

La conclusión es la victoria de la oración: “Y el Señor se retractó del mal que había dicho que iba a hacer a su pueblo” (Éx 32,14). En apariencia es Dios el que ha cambiado de parecer; en realidad es Moisés el que ha cambiado de opinión, pasando del Dios de la cólera al Dios del perdón. La oración cambia al hombre, no a Dios. Al orar, Moisés descubrió el verdadero rostro de Dios, un rostro de fidelidad y de perdón, y supo leer de modo justo el pecado de su pueblo. “La oración es estar delante de Dios para descubrir estas fuentes profundas del amor incluso en situaciones en las cuales, según la lógica histórica, debería funcionar el esquema del pecado, el castigo y la maldición.”

Whenever people could not and did not represent their difficulties and raise up to face the will of God, they fell and failed miserably. Representation means to go again to God and only to God. The failure to represent means to keep distance from God and to do minimum. It is, in the long run to lose sight of God and to do nothing, still worse doing just the opposite as in the case of the golden calf. Moses was a man who was pushed to desire death on the face of the immense task to guide the people alone. However, he remained a faithful, precisely, the most faithful servant of Yahwe.

Moisés es un hombre capaz de lamentarse y hasta de desearse la muerte por el peso de tener que cargar él solo con todo un pueblo (Núm 11,14-15; cf Éx 18,18); pero sigue siendo el siervo (*ebed*) más fiel del Señor (Núm 12,7) y el único mediador del acontecimiento único e irrepetible que insertó para siempre al pueblo en la economía de la revelación (cf Dt 6,14).¹²³

3.4 Representation and Mary

In the New Testament, we come across a lot of instances of representations. The response of Mary to the Angel Gabriel was of raising doubt because of her unmarried status. “How will this be,” Mary asked the angel, “since I am a virgin?” (Lk 1, 34). The Angel explained the plan of God for the humanity to Mary. Did she understand all that the Angel said to her? Definitely no, however, she believed all that the Angel said to her. Though it is not a representation in a strict sense, the dialogue with the angel to clarify on the part of Mary is a good example of listening to God.

The first miracle of Jesus turning water into wine (Jn 2:1-11) is a response of Jesus to the representation or intercession made by his mother Mary. He was not yet prepared and he said, “My hour has not yet come.” (Jn 2:4). However, to surprise of everyone, and of Jesus himself, he performed the miracle. This representation of Mary, any faithful, brings a ‘growth’,

¹²³ P. STEFANI, *Moisés en AA. VV.*, *Nuevo Diccionario de Teología Bíblica*, Ediciones Paulinas, Madrid 1990, 1256-1264. 60-61.

‘movement’, ‘new experience’ and sometimes even jolt and culture shock to the people and to Jesus himself.

3.4.1 Representation and Jesus

There are two other instances wherein Jesus is taken up by surprise and he breaks into thanks giving and praises to God and to the one who surprised him. Let us first consider the miracle of healing a possessed daughter of a Canaanite woman (Mt 15:21-28, Mk 7:24-30). She followed Jesus and pleaded for her daughter. Even disciples were moved to intercede for her to get rid of her annoyance. Jesus rejected to pay heed to her. It looks, he too was a man of his culture that belittles and looks down upon the gentiles as people of no faith. “Many Jews referred to Gentiles as ‘dogs’. Mark refers to her as a ‘Greek’, which is shorthand for ‘pagan’.”¹²⁴ So, He replied, “It is not right to take the children’s bread and toss it to the dogs.” “Yes, Lord,” she said, “even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master’s table.” (Mt 15:27-28). Her response of faith was a blow, a big blow to all who were there, especially to Jesus. His eyes were opened to see the wonder of faith in the pagan woman. Her faith not only healed her possessed daughter but also gave sight to the culturally blinded eyes of Jesus. He was almost dragged out and pushed out of the narrow Jewish cultural boundary. His adamant rejection turned into appreciation and wonder.

Al realizar a distancia el milagro de la curación de la hija poseída, después de haber rechazado por dos veces la petición de su madre, Jesús elogia la grandeza de la fe de la mujer pagana, que se adhiere con generosidad a la voluntad de Dios sin querer otra cosa que lo que Dios quiere: “¡Oh mujer, qué grande es tu fe!” (Mt 15,28).¹²⁵

Representation is to approach God with desire and longing for something more challenging to oneself and even to God.

Another such representation occurs in the episode of the miracle of healing the servant of a Roman centurion. Jewish officials of the synagogue were very positive about him and his contribution to the society. Jesus was ready and willing to go to his house. ““I will go and heal him,” Jesus replied. The centurion answered, “Lord, I am not worthy to have You come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell one to go, and he goes; and another to come, and he

¹²⁴ www.womeninthebible.net/women-bible-old-new-testaments/jesus-cures-syrophoenician-womans-daughter/ accessed on 28.09.2016 at 9.00 am.

¹²⁵ M. ADINOLFI, *Mujer en AA. VV., Nuevo Diccionario de Teología Bíblica*, Ediciones Paulinas, Madrid 1990, 1279 - 1294, 1288.

comes. I tell my servant to do something, and he does it.” (Mt 8:7-9). Jesus was wonderstruck by these words of immortal confession of faith.

3.4.2 Gethsemane – Representation rejected?

In the garden of Gethsemane Jesus’ prayer to the heavenly Father was “Father, if You are willing, take this cup from Me. Yet not My will, but Yours be done.” (Lk 22:41-42). The first part pleads the Father to take that cup of suffering from Jesus if God wills. Thus, the prayer to remove the cup was not absolute, but with a condition which clarified if God willed so. In the second part Jesus confirms and reaffirms that not his own will but Father’s will be done. He went again two more times and with the same emotions and words prayed to the Father. This prayer though not exactly representation, is the closest model of prayer in the life of Jesus where he offers himself in prayer to the will of God. This prayer converted the garden of temptation, of losing one’s faith and going away from God into the garden of confirmation of God’s will for Jesus and of total surrender to it. This representation shows the total surrender of the Son and the total self-emptying of God the Father in the passion event of Jesus. His prayer of representation was totally heard and fulfilled. “Then an angel from heaven appeared to Him and strengthened Him.” (Lk 22:43). He suffered courageously and patiently died on the cross.

4. Conclusion

To conclude this chapter let us summarize it. God entered in to the history through creation of time and space, all non-living and living beings. This mere act became an act of relationship. Humans are called to abide by God given natural and revealed law in total God given freedom to sustain God-human and inter-human relationship. This was God’s initiative to love and live in harmony. Human response is the obedience. It is covenant based which is based on God’s will for humanity. In the Bible disobedience meant losing peace, happiness and joy of relationship with God and fellow humans. God called some humans specially and entrusted his mission of liberating and restoring the Israel and the salvation of the whole creation in Christ. In this chapter we have seen briefly how it was done in the Old Testament in the life, call and mission of Abraham, Moses, prophets and in the New Testament in that of Jesus, Apostles and the early Church. The theme of obedience runs through the history through different context according to the time and space involved. In the case of Abraham and Moses it was a face to face to dialogue with God, worship of God and doing his will. In the inter-testament period of

transition, it was reduced to following rules and customs mechanically and minutely. Jesus comes into the history to take the people back to understand the spirit of the law. In completion of his mission he gives himself up on the cross. To Apostles and to the early Church he became the model of obedience to God. They realized that all authority comes from God and one needed to obey God above all. They taught to obey all authorities, civil and of the Church, as to obey God. However, if laws were against God's will they disobeyed them to obey God, for which they were ready to suffer persecutions and even to lay down their lives.

In the Bible, we do not have direct examples of religious obedience neither of representation. However, the incidents of call narratives, intercessory prayers and miracles of Jesus that involve a prayer etc. give us the closest parallel to the representation to study them closely to understand the dynamics.

In the following chapter, let us study the theme in the Magisterium of the Church - some of the pre-Vatican II encyclicals, in the documents of the second Vatican council and in some of the post-Vatican II encyclicals.

Chapter 3

Obedience – Representation in Magisterium

In this chapter the paper is trying to explore the idea of obedience in the teachings of Popes from Pope Leo XIII to Pope Francis and documents of the Vatican Second Council. It limits itself only to the encyclicals of Popes and does not deal with documents of other commissions of the Holy See, except one on ‘obedience and authority’¹²⁶. In them we can search some light to find criteria and conditions for obedience or disobedience, dialogue in the conflicting situation. To sharpen our search, we could propose following questions. What is obedience according to them? How do they employ this great virtue in their writings? How do they seek refuge in this one of the cardinal virtues in their presentations of their concerns for the Church and the world? What is the basic of obedience? Where do they get help from, to present and to develop the theme of obedience? What are the adversaries of the obedience and how do these documents argue against these adversaries? What are the challenges to obedience in the modern context and how are they tackled? Are these adversaries answered, responded, given explanations adequately? Are there ways and means to keep the faithful protected, formed and armed sufficiently to face the challenges? In course of the search let us try to answer some of these questions.

¹²⁶ CONGREGATION FOR INSTITUTES OF CONSECRATED LIFE AND SOCIETIES OF APOSTOLIC LIFE, *The service of authority and obedience*, 11 May 2008.

To start with, let us consider the pre-Vatican writings. Various Popes have written on the theme of obedience. They have done so not for the sake of insisting it at random. There was felt need in the context of liberalism¹²⁷ that questioned the supreme authority of God. It totally negated it. In doing so, it totally denied all obedience. Socialism also rejected the obedience to authorities. This was viewed as a grave concern of the society. The Church responded to these challenges. Pope Leo XIII (20th Feb 1878 – 20th July 1903) in his long 25 years of papacy addressed the crisis with indomitable courage and fatherly care for the faithful. His successors Pius XI (6th Feb 1922 – 10th Feb 1939), Pius XII (2nd March 1939 – 9th Oct 1958) and John XXIII (28th Oct 1958 – 3rd June 1963) also found it their bounden duty to address the crisis of atheism with all its contemporary historical nuances. They were aware of all the symptoms of liberalism, socialism and relativism that erupted from the same origin of negation of the supremacy of God and negation of obedience to any authority ordained by God. This negation extended step by step from one circle to another, starting from the Church spread till the least family, the nuclear of the society.

1. Obedience in Pre-Vatican II writings

The theme of obedience is as important as in that of the teachings on ecclesiology and religious life in the social teaching of the Church.¹²⁸ As citizens of nations, people have their role in the society, where in they take roles that demand obedience or that carry authority. *Graves de communi*¹²⁹, the encyclical of Pope Leo XIII on Christian democracy, considers that the doctrine on obedience is of grave importance. Because, it is the essence of Christian way of living. The virtue of obedience is not about a mere external act of reverence to an authority. One could see here that the document echoes the idea of St Ignatius that the obedience is not mere external respect to the authority, however, it is the submission of the interior person to the one in authority. It is a question of conduct, above all, it is of conscience.¹³⁰ And through this indispensable virtue one can attain Christian perfection. It is mother of all virtues and virtue of all virtues.

¹²⁷ Cf. A. SIMON, *Liberalism* in AA. VV., *New Catholic Encyclopedia* Vol 1-15, Gale – The Catholic University of America, London Washington DC ²2003, Vol 8, 540-542, 542.

¹²⁸ Cf. P. PAVAN and T. MASSARO, *Social thought, Papal*, in AA. VV., *New Catholic Encyclopedia* Vol 1-15, Gale – The Catholic University of America, London Washington DC ²2003, Vol. 13, 257-269.

And J. NEWMAN and T. MASSARO, *Social thought, Catholic*, in AA. VV., *New Catholic Encyclopedia* Vol 1-15, Gale – The Catholic University of America, London Washington DC ²2003, Vol. 13, 246 – 257.

¹²⁹ LEO XIII, *Graves de communi*: Encyclical on Christian democracy, 19 Jan 1901. Accessed from https://w2.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_18011901_graves-de-communi-re.html accessed on 07.09.2016 at 11am.

¹³⁰ Cf. J. L. GUTIÉRREZ GARCÍA, *Conceptos Fundamentales en la Doctrina Social de la Iglesia*, Tomo III, Centro de Estudios Sociales del Valle de los Caídos, Madrid 1971. 225.

Esta doctrina “es extraordinariamente importante” (*Graves de communi* 8: AL 21, 8-9). Porque la obediencia no es mero acatamiento externo a la autoridad, sino rendimiento interno del hombre a la misma. Es cuestión de conducta, pero sobre todo de conciencia. Y por ello mismo objetivo ineludible, al que debe tender la perfección cristiana.¹³¹

The obedience is an action of faith. Its importance became all the more focused in the historical situation in which the obedience faced a lot of crisis from various sociological, ideological, philosophical factors. These factors made it all the more inevitable to talk about, discuss about and write about to instruct people on obedience toward the end of 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. What was the crisis that provoked encyclicals to talk about obedience? It was, and it is, all permeating crisis that affected the social, ecclesiological, political and economic structures. It emerged from a power struggle to adapt to the change of power centers. It emerged from the process and product through which nations had lost interest in the traditional ways conquering and colonizing the nations. A big change and a paradigm shift was caused by revolution – a proclaimed change of focus from laws and rulers to the ruled, and an apparent change in power of influence from the small group of influent rich to the big powerless masses. The cultural and intellectual renaissance took a different turn. A new change in the reading and interpreting the structures of the society was emerging and flooding the minds and hearts of the people.

The rebellious attitude towards the church authorities had been converted also into rebellious attitude towards the political authorities.¹³² The liberalism in rejecting completely the supreme authority of God and negating totally all obedience, as much in the public life that much in personal and family life. This has been one of the big disturbing agents of this great social value of obedience.¹³³ Leo XIII denounced vehemently malicious influence of another agent of disturbance of obedience namely socialism. Its leaders and followers reject obedience to authorities.¹³⁴ He warned, moreover, that the socialism as the legitimate heir of relativism, led to this grave point of bankruptcy of obedience as much as the liberalism.¹³⁵

¹³¹ J. L. GUTIÉRREZ GARCÍA, 225.

¹³² LEO XIII, *Diuturnum illud*, Encyclical on the origin of civil power, 29 June 1881. Accessed from http://w2.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/es/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_29061881_diuturnum.html on 09.08.2016 at 11.00 am. cf. *Diuturnum illud* 1: AL 1, 269-270. (AL = *Leonis XIII P. M. Acta*, Roma 1891ss.)

¹³³ LEO XIII, *Libertas*, Encyclical on the nature of human liberty, 20 June 1888. Accessed from http://w2.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_20061888_libertas.html on 09.08.2016 at 11.00 am. cf. *Libertas* 24.26: AL 8, 242.

¹³⁴ LEO XIII, *Quod apostolici muneris*, Encyclical on Socialism, 28 Dec. 1878. Accessed from w2.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_28121878_quod-apostolici-muneris.html on 09.08.2016 at 11.00 am. *Quod apostolici muneris* 2: AL 1, 171.

¹³⁵ Cf. J. L. GUTIÉRREZ GARCÍA, 226.

His successors have underlined this crisis, mentioning nuances in every case. Thus, for example, Pius XI situates the decadence of obedience caused by national-socialism¹³⁶ and by the communism that rejects the authority of hierarchy established by God - “rechaza la autoridad jerárquica establecida por Dios”.¹³⁷ For his part Pius XII, has insisted the errors of national-socialism with regard to obedience and grave deviation which calls for a moral commitment in the situation.¹³⁸

The great master of Christian obedience among the popes has been the pope Leo XIII. And all other popes after him repeated and reaffirmed the same. Pope Pius XII makes some specific developments in the theme in terms of the dangers to the obedience in the contemporary ideological and social context. The Vatican second council confirms all the above. Pope Leo XIII put forward the position of the Church with respect to obedience in three encyclicals. Among those three, the third and the last one is *Sapientiae christianae*.¹³⁹ It could be classified and qualified as of extreme importance. It explained the obedience of all sections and forms of Christian vocation. “Las grandes afirmaciones doctrinales básicas están hechas, como queda indicado, por León XIII. En tres documentos, sobre todo la *Diuturnum illud* con nueve pasajes, la *Libertas* con ocho, y la *Sapientiae christianae* con catorce textos. Esta última carta bien puede calificarse de encíclica capital de la obediencia cristiana en todos los campos.”¹⁴⁰ From these three encyclicals we can have a comprehensive understanding of the Catholic doctrine of obedience. Of course, he presented them in the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas, as he like his predecessor advocated that very much through his encyclical *Aeterni Patris*.¹⁴¹ Let us first study some of the pre-Vatican encyclicals to cull out some characteristics of obedience, possible dangers to and temptations to act in perfect obedience in the society and in the Church.

¹³⁶ PIUS XI, *Mit brennender Sorge*, Encyclical on the Church and the German Reich, 14 March 1934. Accessed from http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_14031937_mit-brennender-sorge.html on 09.08.2016 at 11.10 am. cf. *Mit brennender Sorge* 14: AAS 29 [1937] 149. (AAS = *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, Roma 1909ss.)

¹³⁷ PIUS XI, *Divini Redemptoris*, Encyclical on Atheistic communism, 19 March 1937. Accessed from https://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_19370319_divini-redemptoris.html on 09.08.2016 at 11.10 am. *Divini Redemptoris* 19: AAS 29 [1937] 75.

¹³⁸ Cf. J. L. GUTIÉRREZ GARCÍA, 226. cf. *Soyez les bienvenues* 11: AAS 44 [1952] 415-416.

¹³⁹ LEO XIII, *Sapientiae christianae*, Encyclical on Christians as citizens, 10 Jan 1890. Accessed from http://w2.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_10011890_sapientiae-christianae.html accessed on 30/08/2016 at 10.40 am.

¹⁴⁰ J. L. GUTIÉRREZ GARCÍA, 225.

¹⁴¹ Cf. *Aeterni Patris* 29. LEO XIII, *Aeterni Patris*. Encyclical on Restoration of Christian Philosophy, 04 Aug 1879. Accessed from: https://w2.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_04081879_aeterni-patris.html accessed on 28.10.2016 at 9.40 am.

1.1 Total obedience for the sake of God

First and foremost, the obedience has to be absolute, complete, perfect and total. If it is shown in parts, it is not obedience, because it is very much intrinsically connected to faith. If it is not perfect in every detail, it is obedience without its essence. Pope Leo XIII presents it as the distinguishing mark of Catholics. This reminds us of the words of St Ignatius that obedience be the virtue by which each of the Jesuit be known.¹⁴² The union of minds is achieved by obedience of will, shown in deep faith, to the Pope as to God Himself.

Union of minds, therefore, requires, together with a perfect accord in the one faith, complete submission and obedience of will to the Church and to the Roman Pontiff, as to God Himself. This obedience should, however, be perfect, because it is enjoined by faith itself, and has this in common with faith, that it cannot be given in shreds; nay, were it not absolute and perfect in every particular, it might wear the name of obedience, but its essence would disappear. Christian usage attaches such value to this perfection of obedience that it has been, and will ever be, accounted the distinguishing mark by which we are able to recognize Catholics. (*Sapientiae christianae* 22).¹⁴³

Christian theology and doctrine of obedience is that human person has a moral relation with God. This obliges him / her to obey God and all legitimate authorities ordained by God. The foundation of the obedience is “the complete and permanent surrender of human person to the Creator”. In the name of human liberty rejecting the supremacy is unbecoming of human person. This kills the true human nature, identity and essence. The common root of all systems that have interfered and that are interfering still in the cause of the fall of obedience reside in the negation of God and the rejection of moral relation that obliges the human person to obey God and all legitimate authority for the sake of God.¹⁴⁴ Liberty that rejects the supremacy of God is not from true nature, identity and essence of the human person. It is perversion and betrayal of it to negate.

[T]hat man, by a necessity of his nature, is wholly subject to the most faithful and ever-enduring power of God; and that, as a consequence, any liberty, except that which consists in submission to God and in subjection to His will, is unintelligible. To deny the existence of this authority in God, or to refuse to submit to it, means to act, not as a free man, but as one who treasonably abuses his liberty; and in such a disposition of mind the chief and deadly vice of liberalism essentially consists. (*Libertas* 36)¹⁴⁵

¹⁴² Cf. WILLIAM J. YOUNG, *Letters of St. Ignatius of Loyola*, Loyola University Press, Chicago Illinois 1959. 287-296. No. 2. Also in SAN IGNACIO DE LOYOLA, *Obras*, BAC, Madrid ⁵1991, 932-942. The original is from M.I. Epp, IV, 669-81. Letter 3304.

¹⁴³ English quotes of *Sapientiae Christianae* are taken from: http://w2.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_1-xiii_enc_10011890_sapientiae-christianae.html Accessed on 30/08/2016 at 11.10am. Whereas, J. L. GUTIÉRREZ GARCÍA quotes from the Spanish version: *Sapientiae christianae* AL 10.

¹⁴⁴ Cf. J. L. GUTIÉRREZ GARCÍA, 226.

¹⁴⁵ English quotes of *Libertas* are taken from: http://w2.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_1-xiii_enc_20061888_libertas.html accessed on 31.08.2016 at 10.30 am. J. L. GUTIÉRREZ GARCÍA quotes from

The encyclical goes on to explain how the sin in many ways and in various degrees can influence humans to withdraw their obedience to God and any legitimate authority. This is perversion with a new and attractive name of liberalism. Private and domestic matters too come under the obedience.

The form, however, of the sin is manifold; for in more ways and degrees than one can the will depart from the obedience which is due to God or to those who share the divine power. For, to reject the supreme authority to God, and to cast off all obedience to Him in public matters, or even in private and domestic affairs, is the greatest perversion of liberty and the worst kind of liberalism; and what We have said must be understood to apply to this alone in its fullest sense. (*Libertas* 36-37)

All powers and authorities to govern come under God's law, as they are universally applicable. All, without any exception, comes under this law. From God's right arise right to be obeyed. This obedience is in all actions. Moral values must be in harmony with the law of God.

This God, this Sovereign Master, has issued commandments whose value is independent of time and space, country and race. As God's sun shines on every human face so His law knows neither privilege nor exception. Rulers and subjects, crowned and uncrowned, rich and poor are equally subject to His word. From the fullness of the Creators' right there naturally arises the fullness of His right to be obeyed by individuals and communities, whoever they are. This obedience permeates all branches of activity in which moral values claim harmony with the law of God, and pervades all integration of the ever-changing laws of man into the immutable laws of God. (*Mit brennender Sorge* 10)¹⁴⁶

The ultimate base of the obedience is religion. Therefore, the religion plays an important role of transcendence in the deep animation of public life. It does not only consolidate the obedience, but also, imbibes and inculcates in the citizen a 'loving respect' toward the authority. This avoids any revolution and the dangers of revolution that affects the liberty of the majority of citizens.¹⁴⁷

It is therefore necessary to seek a higher and more reliable reason for obedience, and to say explicitly that legal severity cannot be efficacious unless men are led on by duty, and moved by the salutary fear of God. But this is what religion can best ask of them, religion which by its power enters into the souls and bends the very wills of men causing them not only to render obedience to their rulers, but also to show their affection and good will, which is in every society of men the best guardian of safety. (*Diuturnum illud* 24)¹⁴⁸.

Libertas: AL 8.

¹⁴⁶ PIUS XI, *Mit brennender sorge*, Encyclical on the Church and the German reich. English quotes are from: http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_14031937_mit-brennender-sorge.html accessed on 31.08.2016 at 10.50 am. J. L. GUTIÉRREZ GARCÍA quotes from *Mit brennender Sorge*: AAS 29 [1937].

¹⁴⁷ Cf. J. L. GUTIÉRREZ GARCÍA, 230. cf. *Libertas* 17: AL 8, 232.

¹⁴⁸ *Diuturnum illud* 18: AL 2, 283-284.

1.2 Mediation and Situational ethics

One needs to obey God ultimately. However, there is something more. This ultimate surrender and commitment to God does not put a person in a direct relationship with God. It has to be channelized through some immediate and close obedience to the commandments of God and to the authorities established by God. The real obedience cannot eliminate this necessary bridge. Pius XII reminds us of errors of the situational ethics and moral, in his discourse on the same in *Soyez les bienvenues* to the Catholic World Federation of Young Women (April 18, 1952).¹⁴⁹

Situational ethics and obedience: Situational ethics considers that a person is an entity in himself / herself, isolated from all other human social, realities. It pretends to place a person fully and only before God – face to face. This again avoiding intermediation of any legitimate authority. The God projected here is not a God of law, but God of love. Every decision is a personal link before this God of love. Right intentions and right response are what God is interested in.

La ética nueva (adaptada a las circunstancias), dicen sus autores, es eminentemente “individual”. En la determinación de la conciencia cada hombre en particular se entiende directamente con Dios y delante de Él se decide sin intervención de ninguna ley, de ninguna autoridad, de ninguna comunidad, de ningún culto o confesión, en nada y de ninguna manera. Aquí lo único que hay es el yo del hombre y el Yo del Dios personal; no del Dios de la ley, sino del Dios Padre, al que el hombre debe unirse con amor filial. Vista de este modo, la decisión de la conciencia es, pues, un “riesgo” personal; según el conocimiento y la valoración propias, con plena sinceridad delante de Dios. Estas dos cosas, la intención recta y la respuesta sincera, son lo que Dios considera; la acción no le importa. De manera que la respuesta puede ser la de cambiar la fe católica por otros principios, divorciarse, interrumpir la gestación, rehusar la obediencia a la autoridad competente en la familia, en la Iglesia, en el Estado, y así en otras cosas. (*Soyez les bienvenues* 11: AAS 44 [1952] 415-416)¹⁵⁰

1.3 Obedience and human conscience

Only God can oblige in conscience and who, therefore, can reclaim the deep internal and external outward homage that obedience implies. Though the concept of conscience is not unknown in the Holy Scripture, it appears very rarely in the Old Testament and in the Gospel, does not appear at all. In the writings of the Apostles it appears often.

El concepto de conciencia no era desconocido en el mundo antiguo, que conocía la responsabilidad frente al bien y al mal; (...) sólo dos veces se halla en el AT (Ecl 10,20; Sab 17,10; cf. la variante del *Sinático* a Ecl 42,18). En los Evangelios no se encuentra en absoluto

¹⁴⁹ PIUS XII, *Soyez les bienvenues*, Address to the Catholic World Federation of Young Women, April 18, 1952. Accessed from: https://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/es/speeches/1952/documents/hf_p-xii_spe_19520418_soyez-bienvenues.html accessed on 31.08.2016 at 12.00pm.

¹⁵⁰ J. L. GUTIÉRREZ GARCÍA, 227-28.

(la variante de Jn 8,9 no es auténtica); en cambio, Pablo, Heb y Pedro la emplean con frecuencia inverosímil (unas 30 veces), por lo general acompañada de un adjetivo calificativo: conciencia buena, mala, manchada, pura. Es posible que el Apóstol la tomara de su paisano, el filósofo estoico Atenodoro de Canana, antiguo maestro del emperador Augusto.¹⁵¹

Thus, the concept of conscience is a contribution of philosophy which is well employed in theology to explain the obedience. Pope John XXIII insists in the same manner as Pope Pius XI.¹⁵² This is so because obedience stands in close contact with conscience. It comes under the realm of God in a person. Any submission that does not address to the human conscience is dehumanizing. A system of ‘reward and punishment’ does not and cannot make a human to live up to his / her full human potentials of free human conscience. When authorities dissect themselves from God, they lose their authority to make their subjects to obey; because, as we said in the beginning of this paragraph obedience belongs to the realm of conscience.

Hence, a regime which governs solely or mainly by means of threats and intimidation or promises of reward, provides men with no effective incentive to work for the common good. And even if it did, it would certainly be offensive to the dignity of free and rational human beings. Authority is before all else a moral force. For this reason, the appeal of rulers should be to the individual conscience, to the duty which every man has of voluntarily contributing to the common good. But since all men are equal in natural dignity, no man has the capacity to force internal compliance on another. Only God can do that, for He alone scrutinizes and judges the secret counsels of the heart. Hence, representatives of the State have no power to bind men in conscience, unless their own authority is tied to God’s authority, and is a participation in it. (cf. *Diuturnum illud*: AL 2, 274) (*Pacem in terris* 48-49)¹⁵³.

The general principle of obedience to any legitimate authority flow spontaneously. It is an obligation of conscience, and a general and permanent obligation. The Church has always urged this doctrine in its regular insistence on the life of politics. It was done during the Roman imperial time¹⁵⁴; and it is continuing till now preaching and inculcating the obligation of obeying and of respecting the temporal authorities who receive their noble origin from God.¹⁵⁵

Citizens must obey out of respect, in a sense of duty and conscience and not to please those in authorities. This is the way to found the authority in a sturdy rocky foundation.

¹⁵¹ C. SPICQ, *Conciencia* en JOHANNES H. BAUER, *Diccionario de teología bíblica* con un prólogo de L. ARNALDICH, Editorial Herder, Barcelona 1967, 194-198, 194.

¹⁵² Cf. J. L. GUTIÉRREZ GARCÍA, 227.

¹⁵³ JOHN XXIII, *Pacem in terris*, Encyclical on Establishing universal peace in truth, justice, charity, and liberty, April 11, 1963. English quotes are taken from: http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_11041963_pacem.html accessed on 2nd Oct, 2016 at 11.20 pm. J. L. GUTIÉRREZ GARCÍA quotes from *Pacem in terris*: AAS 55 [1963].

¹⁵⁴ cf. *Diuturnum illud* 14: AL 2, 279- 280.

¹⁵⁵ Cf. J. L. GUTIÉRREZ GARCÍA, 228. Cf. *Summi pontificatus* 71: AAS 31 [1939] 447- 448.

PIUS XII, *Summi pontificatus*, Encyclical on the unity of human society, 20 Oct. 1939. Accessed from: w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/.../hf_p-xii_enc_20101939_summi-pontificatus.html accessed on 20.09.2016 at 11 am.

Whence it will behoove citizens to submit themselves and to be obedient to rulers, as to God, not so much through fear of punishment as through respect for their majesty; nor for the sake of pleasing, but through conscience, as doing their duty. And by this means authority will remain far more firmly seated in its place. For the citizens, perceiving the force of this duty, would necessarily avoid dishonesty and contumacy, because they must be persuaded that they who resist State authority resist the divine will; that they who refuse honor to rulers refuse it to God Himself. (*Diuturnum illud* 13)¹⁵⁶.

It is the mandate of natural law and the teaching of revelation that maintains this most important obligation of conscience.¹⁵⁷ Jesus Christ the eternal Word of the Father, himself, who with his teaching and example urged and sanctified the obedience.¹⁵⁸ And from this virtue early Christians have given definite testimony ‘example in honesty when the rules were just and they were ready to die always if they could not retain their honour, dignity and public responsibilities without losing their conscience.’¹⁵⁹

And the Christians of old left the most striking proofs of this; for, when they were harassed in a very unjust and cruel way by pagan emperors, they nevertheless at no time omitted to conduct themselves obediently and submissively, so that, in fact, they seemed to vie with each other: those in cruelty, and these in obedience. This great modesty, this fixed determination to obey, was so well known that it could not be obscured by the calumny and malice of enemies. (*Diuturnum illud* 18, 19)¹⁶⁰.

There are numerous texts in relation to civil obedience, that is the obligation towards political authorities and their just laws in the Old and New Testaments. They give the Christian law of obedience in consonance with the natural law. From these texts these encyclicals form and support the doctrine of obedience.

Both the natural and the Christian law command us to revere those who in their various grades are shown above us in the State, and to submit ourselves to their just commands. It is quite in keeping with our dignity as men and Christians to obey, not only exteriorly, but from the heart, as the Apostle expresses it, “for conscience’ sake,” when he commands us to keep our soul subject to the higher powers. (Rom. 13, 1.5) (*Graves de communi* 9)¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁶ LEO XIII, *Diuturnum*, Encyclical on the origin of civil power. English quotes are from: http://w2.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_29061881_diuturnum.html accessed on 20.09.2016 at 11.00 am. J.L. Gutiérrez García quotes from *Diuturnum illud* : AL 2.

¹⁵⁷ Cf. *Diuturnum illud* 10: AL 2, 276-277; *Sapientiae christianae* 3: AL 10, 16-17.

¹⁵⁸ PIUS XI, *Ubi arcano*, Encyclical on the peace of Christ in the kingdom of Christ, 23 Dec 1922. Accessed from: w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/..hf_p-xi_enc_23121922_ubi-arcano-dei-consilio.html accessed on 20.09.2016 at 11 am.

cf. *Ubi arcano* 32: AAS 14 [1922] 687-688.

¹⁵⁹ Cf. J. L. GUTIÉRREZ GARCÍA, 228. cf. *Immortale Dei* 22: AL 5, 147.

¹⁶⁰ *Diuturnum illud* 14: AL 2, 279-280.

¹⁶¹ English quotes are taken from https://w2.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_18011901_graves-de-communi-re.html accessed on 02/09/2016 at 9.45 am. J. L. GUTIÉRREZ GARCÍA quotes from *Graves de communi*: AL 21.

1.4 Dignity of citizens

The Christian doctrine on the political or civil obedience saves the dignity of the citizens. The obedience does not humble neither the citizen nor the right force of the authority. It does avoid any abuse of power. It balances the instable and rigid dynamism between authority and liberty. In this way, the obedience remains dignified in an extraordinary form, because, people obey the most just and the highest authority. “De esta manera, la obediencia queda dignificada de forma extraordinaria, ya que se obedece a la más justa y alta autoridad.” (*Libertas* 10: AL 8, 223).¹⁶²

The obedience is to help authority on the one hand and on the other, it favours just and wise reforms of the people. It imposes respect to the authority and defends rights of the people. It puts a check on the rulers who try to rule as tyrant oppressors.

At the same time, it sustains and cements the civil and political order by giving on one side most efficacious aid to authority, and on the other by showing itself favorable to the wise reforms and the just aspirations of the classes that are governed; by imposing respect for rulers and enjoining whatever obedience is due to them, and by defending unwaveringly the imprescriptible rights of the human conscience. And thus, it is that the people who are subject to her influence have no fear of oppression because she checks in their efforts the rulers who seek to govern as tyrants. (*Annum ingressi* 20)¹⁶³

When the conscience is guided by healthy fear of God, the obedience becomes an enhancing factor of human dignity, not otherwise. Religion plays a vital role in inviting people to pay their obedience to authorities along with affection and goodwill. The Christian doctrine of obedience envisages mutual rights and duties in both rulers and people. It helps them remain in their duties which is agreed upon according to nature and concord of wills which are very basic for administration.

Nevertheless, the divine power of the Christian religion has given birth to excellent principles of stability and order for the State, while at the same time it has penetrated into the customs and institutions of States. And of this power not the least nor last fruit is a just and wise proportion of mutual rights and duties in both princes and peoples. For in the precepts and example of Christ our Lord there is a wonderful force for restraining in their duty as much those who obey as those who rule; and for keeping between them that agreement which is most according to nature, and that concord of wills, so to speak, from which arises a course of administration tranquil and free from all disturbance. (*Diuturnum illud* 3)¹⁶⁴

¹⁶² J. L. GUTIÉRREZ GARCÍA, 229.

¹⁶³ LEO XIII, *Annum ingressi*. Apostolic Letter 1902. <http://www.tfp.org/TFP-home/catholic-perspective/annum-ingressi-apostolic-letter-of-pope-leo-xiii.html> accessed on 02/09/2016 at 10.05 am. Published in *The American Catholic Quarterly Review*, Vol. XXVII (January to October, 1902), pp. 583-601. *Annum ingressi*: AL 22.

¹⁶⁴ J. L. GUTIÉRREZ GARCÍA quotes from *Diuturnum illud* 2: AL 2, 270.

We do not become low or mean through this act of obeying. Obedience is not merely to men but to God. When we obey a human authority in accordance with the Divinely created order we obey the Creator of the order. Therefore, we are rather elevated to a higher level of being. To serve God is to rule.

The application of this principle likewise safeguards the dignity of citizens. Their obedience to civil authorities is never an obedience paid to them as men. It is in reality an act of homage paid to God, the provident Creator of the universe, who has decreed that men's dealings with one another be regulated in accordance with that order which He Himself has established. And we men do not demean ourselves in showing due reverence to God. On the contrary, we are lifted up and ennobled in spirit, for to serve God is to reign. (*Pacem in terris* 50)¹⁶⁵

1.5 Disobedience

These encyclicals have never envisaged an absolute obedience to authorities. They have always qualified and distinguished the authorities as legitimate and illegitimate, and their actions and laws as just and unjust. This puts us on guard against any abuse of the authority and obedience. Therefore, disobeying a legitimate authority and just laws is sin. It is coming from the basic religious principle of political obedience. This disobedience demeans the foundation of the dignity of human person. Further, it disturbs the basic absolute Divinely established order.

To despise legitimate authority, in whomsoever vested, is unlawful, as a rebellion against the divine will, and whoever resists that, rushes willfully to destruction. "He that resisteth the power resisteth the ordinance of God, and they that resist, purchase to themselves damnation." (Rom. 13,2). To cast aside obedience, and by popular violence to incite to revolt, is therefore treason, not against man only, but against God. (*Immortale Dei* 2)¹⁶⁶

If men valuing their personal liberty, negate all dependency on authority endowed with right to correct and control, will undermine and weaken with their disobedience the foundation of their own dignity of liberty. "Si los hombres, valiéndose de su libertad personal, negaran toda dependencia de una autoridad superior dotada con el derecho de coacción, socavarían con esta desobediencia el fundamento de su propia dignidad y libertad, es decir, aquel orden absoluto de los seres y de los fines." (*Benignitas et humanitas* 20: AAS 37 [1945] 15).¹⁶⁷

In and through the discernment if one finds that the human authority goes beyond its limits/he must act courageously to show one's true obedience to God. The basic and inevitable theme of

¹⁶⁵ JOHN XXIII, *Pacem in terris* - Encyclical on Establishing universal peace in truth, justice, charity, and liberty april 11, 1963. English quotes are taken from: http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_11041963_pacem.html accessed on 02/09/2016 at 10.20 am. J. L. GUTIÉRREZ GARCÍA quotes from *Pacem in terris*: AAS 55 [1963].

¹⁶⁶ LEO XIII, *Immortale Dei*. Encyclical on the Christian constitution of states, 01 Nov 1885. English quotes are from: http://w2.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_01111885_immortale-dei.html accessed on 01/09/2016 at 10.28 am. J. L. GUTIÉRREZ GARCÍA quotes from *Immortale Dei*: AL 5.

¹⁶⁷ J. L. GUTIÉRREZ GARCÍA, 230.

the Christian doctrine on political obedience is the obligation of not to obey in certain specific situation. It is logically derived from the arguments on the origin and the aim of obedience. First and foremost, the criterion of political obedience is that the necessity of the origin of the authority or at least the exercising of the authority be just. And the next is that the contents of the law be just. The political authority is not pretention of total absolute authority, but it is conditional. One has to obey God before men. Therefore, the obedience to the temporal authorities is hierarchical derived from the divine authority. Disobeying the unjust law is to obey God.

But where the power to command is wanting, or where a law is enacted contrary to reason, or to the eternal law, or to some ordinance of God, obedience is unlawful, lest, while obeying man, we become disobedient to God. Thus, an effectual barrier being opposed to tyranny, the authority in the State will not have all its own way, but the interests and rights of all will be safeguarded - the rights of individuals, of domestic society, and of all the members of the commonwealth; all being free to live according to law and right reason; and in this, as We have shown, true liberty really consists. (*Libertas* 13)¹⁶⁸

The authority and right to command has its validity as long as it is in tune with the will of God. If it is directed against the divine order it is just and right to disobey it.

for the right to command and to require obedience exists only so far as it is in accordance with the authority of God, and is within the measure that He has laid down. But when anything is commanded which is plainly at variance with the will of God, there is a wide departure from this divinely constituted order, and at the same time a direct conflict with divine authority; therefore, it is right not to obey. (*Libertas* 30)¹⁶⁹

It is good to listen to a witness of a Catholic activist who felt confirmed by these encyclicals. Jim Forest is a Jesuit, social activist and a prolific writer on society, who has been jailed several times for acts of civil disobedience. Once, he was in jail for more than a year after burning draft records as a protest against the Vietnam War. He has authored many books. He wrote biographies of Thomas Merton and Dorothy Day two other activists of peace and right for life.¹⁷⁰ He acknowledged like many other Catholic activists that the encyclicals of Popes on social issues became driving and inspiring forces to go ahead with their protests against evil forces of powerful nations. Thomas Merton creatively came out with his writings based on the dilemma between the religious obedience and the involvement in the social issues.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁸ J. L. GUTIÉRREZ GARCÍA, quotes from *Libertas* 10: AL 8, 223-224.

¹⁶⁹ J. L. GUTIÉRREZ GARCÍA, quotes from *Libertas* 21: AL 8, 238.

¹⁷⁰ J. FOREST, *All Is Grace: A Biography of Dorothy Day*, Orbis, Maryknoll - New York 2011.

J. FOREST, *Living with Wisdom: A Life of Thomas Merton*, Orbis, Maryknoll - New York 2008.

J. FOREST, *The Root of War is Fear: Thomas Merton's Advice to Peacemakers*, Orbis, Maryknoll - New York 2016.

¹⁷¹ J. M. CIRAULO, "Thomas Merton's Creative (dis)Obedience": *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* 46,2 (2011) 189-219. Available on line: <http://eds.a.ebscohost.com/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=9&sid=bb313eb8-3b43-48c3->

[I]n 1963, Pope John XXIII wrote an encyclical, *Pacem in Terris* (Peace on Earth), in which conscience and disobedience were central topics. It was the first papal encyclical addressed not only to Catholics, but also to all people of good will. The primary human right, Pope John XXIII pointed out, is the right to life. Without that no other right has any meaning. As no human activity so undermines the right to life as war (with abortion a close second), peacemaking is among the highest and most urgent human callings. [...] Pope John XXIII pointed out that laws that violate the moral order have no legitimacy and do not merit obedience: “[...] Thus any government which [refuses] to recognize human rights or [acts] in violation of them, [not only fails] in its duty; its decrees [are] wholly lacking in binding force.” Peacemaking was the encyclical’s core issue. Pope John gave particular attention to dangers posed by weapons of mass destruction, declaring that, in this context, it is absurd to regard war as just.¹⁷²

Diuturnum illud also insists on the same. Jesus orders to give God the things that are God’s. Apostles say that God rather than men. Following these words, one need to disobey the rulers to be obedient to God. If the ruler demands openly that is abominable to natural and divine law one can disobey. In doing so, s/he is obeying the natural law and doing the will of God.

The one only reason which men have for not obeying is when anything is demanded of them which is openly repugnant to the natural or the divine law, for it is equally unlawful to command to do anything in which the law of nature or the will of God is violated. If, therefore, it should happen to anyone to be compelled to prefer one or the other, viz., to disregard either the commands of God or those of rulers, he must obey Jesus Christ, who commands us to “give to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s,” (Mt 22. 21) and must reply courageously after the example of the Apostles: “We ought to obey God rather than men.” (Act 5.29) And yet there is no reason why those who so behave themselves should be accused of refusing obedience; for, if the will of rulers is opposed to the will and the laws of God, they themselves exceed the bounds of their own power and pervert justice; nor can their authority then be valid, which, when there is no justice, is null. (*Diuturnum illud* 15)¹⁷³

In rejecting obedience to the unjust demands of the rulers, one does not deny the just obedience due to rulers. The demonstrated disobedience is to remind the rulers of their limits of their conditional political authority within the absolute authority of God.

Here anew it becomes evident how unjust is the reproach of sedition; for the obedience, due to rulers and legislators is not refused, but there is a deviation from their will in those precepts only which they have no power to enjoin. Commands that are issued adversely to the honor due to God, and hence are beyond the scope of justice, must be looked upon as anything rather than laws. (*Sapientiae christianae* 10)¹⁷⁴

In a context, politically different, but morally identical, Pope Pious XII reiterated the same doctrine of Pope Leo XIII. The attitude of the early Church was the same that practiced with heroism until martyrdom.

923a-281860020953%40sessionmgr4006&hid=4102 accessed on 07/09/2016 at 10.10 pm.

¹⁷² J. FOREST, “Holy Disobedience”: *U.S. Catholic*, 81, 9, 2016, 33-35. Available online: <http://eds.a.ebscohost.com/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=6&sid=237ae10d-8856-4556-b954-5b5d82c867df%40sessionmgr4007&hid=4102> accessed on 07/09/2016 at 5.50 pm

¹⁷³ J. L. GUTIÉRREZ GARCÍA quotes from *Diuturnum illud* 11: AL 2, 277.

¹⁷⁴ J. L. GUTIÉRREZ GARCÍA quotes from *Sapientiae christianae* 3: AL 10, 16.

Where the dependence of human right upon the Divine is denied, where appeal is made only to some insecure idea of a merely human authority, and an autonomy is claimed which rests only upon a utilitarian morality, there human law itself justly forfeits in its more weighty application the moral force which is the essential condition for its acknowledgment and also for its demand of sacrifices. (*Summi pontificatus* 55)¹⁷⁵

Pope Pius XI, has insisted on the same, and put it a defining characteristic of justice, obedience and the natural right. In the light of the natural rights, any law that is against these, cannot be made right by oppression nor by any external force.

A la luz de las normas de este derecho natural puede ser valorado todo derecho positivo, cualquiera que sea el legislador, en su contenido ético, y, consiguientemente, en la legitimidad del mandato y en la obligación que implica de cumplirlo. Las leyes humanas que están en oposición insoluble con el derecho natural, adolecen de un vicio original que no puede subsanarse ni con las opresiones ni con el aparato de la fuerza externa. (*Mit brennender Sorge* 35: AAS 29 [1937] 159).¹⁷⁶

This most important attitude, urged apostles Peter and Paul to declare that it is just to disobey when the legislation contains precepts contrary to the eternal laws of God. “Es justo desobedecer cuando la legislación positiva contiene preceptos contrarios a la ley eterna de Dios.” (*Sapientiae christianae* 3: AL 10, 16-17). The encyclical of *Sapientiae christianae* focuses on conflicting situations. It constantly insists on the obligation to obey that everyone has towards the Church.

This total obedience – uncompromising disobedience dialectical tension carries with it the in between stage of representation, manifestation and making the rulers know of their limit in every project they undertake and lay they constitute, on the part the people. They must always voice their total allegiance to God and truthfulness to their conscience, ordained divinely and by natural law. And, on the part of the rulers, they ought to listen to the counsels of the voices that opine the integral growth of the people. If they do not obey these voices the do not merit obedience, rather disobedience.

1.6 Obedience to the Church

In the doctrine of obedience encyclicals have also instructed on the obedience to the Church, the spouse of Christ. Jesus Christ has ordained all humans to obey the Church equal to Himself. He also warns of eternal condemnation in the case of failure to obey this mandate. This obedience has to be given to all of the ecclesial hierarchy. They define the mode of Christian

¹⁷⁵ PIUS XII, *Summi pontificatus*. Encyclical on the unity of human society, 20 Oct 1939. English quotes are from: http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_20101939_summi-pontificatus.html. *Summi pontificatus* 42: AAS 31 [1939] 432.

¹⁷⁶ J. L. GUTIÉRREZ GARCÍA, 232.

living and conduct. “(Jesucristo) ha ordenado a todos los hombres que obedezcan a la Iglesia igual que a El mismo, amenazando con la condenación eterna a cuantos desobedezcan este mandato.” (*Libertas* 20: AL 8, 235). Esta obediencia ha de prestarse a toda la jerarquía eclesiástica, a la cual pertenece fijar el modo de acción de los cristianos (cf. *Sapientiae christiana*e 19: AL 10, 32-33).¹⁷⁷ It is the bounden duty of every Christian to abide by any rule laid by the hierarchical Church. The Church rightfully and by obligation has to declare its authoritative decisions and judgement and has to put them into practice. “[W]hen the Hierarchy has made a decision on any point Catholics are bound to obey their directives. The Church has the right and obligation not merely to guard ethical and religious principles, but also to declare its authoritative judgment in the matter of putting these principles into practice.” (*Mater et magistra* 239)¹⁷⁸

Graves de communi calls all Christians to submit to the authority of the Church in whatsoever project they may undertake and to obey its precepts so that they may not go astray. It instructs them that all their endeavors be subject to the Church for fuller realization of their vocation. God is pleased with those who obey and leads them in His goodness even in their most difficult situations caused by obedience.

We recur again to what We have already declared and We insist upon it most solemnly; viz., that whatever projects individuals or associations form in this matter should be formed under episcopal authority. Let them not be led astray by an excessive zeal in the cause of charity. If it leads them to be wanting in proper submission, it is not a sincere zeal; it will not have any useful result and cannot be acceptable to God. God delights in the souls of those who put aside their own designs and obey the rulers of His Church as if they were obeying Him; He assists them even when they attempt difficult things and benignly leads them to their desired end. (*Graves de communi* 26)¹⁷⁹

1.7 Temptations of withdrawal of obedience

The Church authorities are placed by the Holy Spirit to rule it which has cost the precious blood of Christ. Therefore, it is unchristian and abominable to withdraw oneself from obeying the Church and the authorities. The faithful must implant this in their hearts. All ministers, bishops, priests and deacons must meditate profoundly and work on it. They must set examples to the faithful by obeying bishops and the Holy See.

It is abhorrent to the profession of Christianity that any one should feel unwilling to be subject and obedient to those who rule in the Church, and first of all to the bishops whom (without

¹⁷⁷ Cf. J. L. GUTIÉRREZ GARCÍA, 234,

¹⁷⁸ JOHN XXIII, *Mater et magistra*. Encyclical on Christianity and social progress, May 15, 1961. English quotes are from http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_15051961_mater.html accessed on 5.10.2016 at 1.30 pm.

¹⁷⁹ *Graves de communi* 19: AL 21, 18-19.

prejudice to the universal power of the Roman Pontiff) “the Holy Spirit has placed to rule the Church of God which Christ has purchased by His Blood.” (Act. 20,28). He who thinks or acts otherwise is guilty of ignoring the grave precept of the Apostle who bids us to obey our rulers and to be subject to them, for they watch as having to give an account of our souls. (Hebr. 13,17). Let the faithful everywhere implant these principles deep in their souls, and put them in practice in their daily life, and let the ministers of the Gospel meditate them profoundly, and incessantly labor, not merely by exhortation but especially by example, to teach them to others. (*Graves de communi* 9)¹⁸⁰

The Roman Pontiff has not only to rule the Church but also to regulate the life and actions of the Christian citizens all over the world. In and through his political prudence he must embrace the diverse things to educate them. From this it is clear that the faithful must follow the practical political wisdom of the Church.

The like disposition and the same order should prevail in the Christian society by so much the more that the political prudence of the Pontiff embraces diverse and multiform things, for it is his charge not only to rule the Church, but generally so to regulate the actions of Christian citizens that these may be in apt conformity to their hope of gaining eternal salvation. Whence it is clear that, in addition to the complete accordance of thought and deed, the faithful should follow the practical political wisdom of the ecclesiastical authority. (*Sapientiae christianae* 37)¹⁸¹

These texts refer to the obedience of Catholics in their social actions or any apostolates (cf. *Firmissimam constantiam*¹⁸² 42: AAS 29 [1937] 198-199). They aim at union of actions by the virtue of the obedience they owe to the Magisterium of the Church for the unity of faith. (cf. *Sapientiae christianae* 11: AL 10, 24).¹⁸³ In other words, the matter of obedience to the Church and its ministers has no limit. It is like the matter to be discussed with a spiritual guide, everything under the sun and above it. As the faith is all-permeating, all comes under the obedience to the Church. In order to maintain unity of faith, they also insist on the obedience that has to be shown towards teachings of the Church.

In defining the limits of the obedience owed to the pastors of souls, but most of all to the authority of the Roman Pontiff, it must not be supposed that it is only to be yielded in relation to dogmas of which the obstinate denial cannot be disjoined from the crime of heresy. Nay, further, it is not enough sincerely and firmly to assent to doctrines which, though not defined by any solemn pronouncement of the Church, are by her proposed to belief, as divinely revealed, in her common and universal teaching, and which the Vatican Council declared are to be believed “with Catholic and divine faith.” (Vatican Council, Constit. de fide catholica, cap. 3, De fide. Cf. H. Denziger, *Enchiridion Symbolorum* 11 ed., Freiburg i. Br., 1911), p. 476.) (*Sapientiae christianae* 24)¹⁸⁴

¹⁸⁰ *Graves de communi* 8: AL 21, 8-9.

¹⁸¹ *Sapientiae christianae* 19: AL 10, 34-35.

¹⁸² PIUS XI, *Firmissimam constantiam*, Encyclical on the Religious situation in Mexico, 28 March 1937. Accessed from: https://w2.vatican.va/.../pius.../hf_p-xi_enc_19370328_firmissimam-constantiam.html accessed on 15.09.2016 at 10.00 am.

¹⁸³ Cf. J. L. GUTIÉRREZ GARCÍA, 233.

¹⁸⁴ *Sapientiae christianae* 12: AL 10, 26-27.

1.8 Obedience to the Church in All matters

As the Catholics obey in the matters of the faith to the Church, they also must obey in the matters of other areas also. They must allow themselves to be guided by the Church. Pope Leo XIII states with great authority, that has been endowed with, that the Church has the right to decide what is good for the people. It looks at the first sight very authoritative. A deeper re-reading and study of it shows how much the Church takes responsibility in the matters, however small or big it may be, that affects and touches the life of the people. He really means what he says as the head of the Church. It takes its people seriously and their life struggles in the path of perfection. Continuously and constantly it engages itself in explaining its position to guide them in the matters such as respect for life, abortion, euthanasia, homosexuality etc. so that, they may have access to the authentic teachings in concordance with the faith. These teachings sometimes go against the political policy of the different nations. All the ministries offered in families and in special homes for the old, perennially sick and to differently abled are the expressions of the obedience to the teachings of the mother Church.

But this likewise must be reckoned amongst the duties of Christians, that they allow themselves to be ruled and directed by the authority and leadership of bishops, and, above all, of the apostolic see. And how fitting it is that this should be so any one can easily perceive. For the things contained in the divine oracles have reference to God in part, and in part to man, and to whatever is necessary for the attainment of his eternal salvation. Now, both these, that is to say, what we are bound to believe and what we are obliged to do, are laid down, as we have stated, by the Church using her divine right, and in the Church by the supreme Pontiff. Wherefore it belongs to the Pope to judge authoritatively what things the sacred oracles contain, as well as what doctrines are in harmony, and what in disagreement, with them; and also, for the same reason, to show forth what things are to be accepted as right, and what to be rejected as worthless; what it is necessary to do and what to avoid doing, in order to attain eternal salvation. For, otherwise, there would be no sure interpreter of the commands of God, nor would there be any safe guide showing man the way he should live. (*Sapientiae christianae* 24)¹⁸⁵

1.9 Conflict situations

There are two types of conflicts with regard to compatibility of the civil law with the teachings of the Church. The first is with regard to a situation where the Church has no positive law on a matter and there is a law or a rule or a norm of the civil authority that is contrary to the natural or revealed law. And the second is with regard to a situation where the Church has a positive law and a civil law that demands the opposite.¹⁸⁶ The Church is aware of these conflicts. Therefore, it teaches that it is legitimate to love oneself and all that belongs to him / her. But

¹⁸⁵ *Sapientiae christianae* 12: AL 10, 26-27.

¹⁸⁶ Cf. J. L. GUTIÉRREZ GARCÍA, 234.

when it comes to the question of duty towards the Church and God, one must love more God and the mother Church.

Moreover, if we would judge aright, the supernatural love for the Church and the natural love of our own country proceed from the same eternal principle, since God Himself is their Author and originating Cause. Consequently, it follows that between the duties they respectively enjoin, neither can come into collision with the other. We can, certainly, and should love ourselves, bear ourselves kindly toward our fellow men, nourish affection for the State and the governing powers; but at the same time, we can and must cherish toward the Church a feeling of filial piety, and love God with the deepest love of which we are capable. (*Sapientiae christianae* 6)¹⁸⁷

A conflict situation, in which the nation, country, city sometimes one's own tribe or a group one belongs to demands something contrary to the Church one's love, faith and the maturity of spirituality is put to test. The Church is not irrational in its demands for it adapts itself wherever it is necessary. In some matters of grave importance, in which the faithful may experience conflicts and dilemma the Church has specially addressed some norms in the encyclicals to doctors, social workers etc.

The order of precedence of these duties is, however, at times, either under stress of public calamities, or through the perverse will of men, inverted. For, instances occur where the State seems to require from men as subjects one thing, and religion, from men as Christians, quite another; and this in reality without any other ground, then that the rulers of the State either hold the sacred power of the Church of no account, or endeavor to subject it to their own will. Hence arises a conflict, and an occasion, through such conflict, of virtue being put to the proof. The two powers are confronted and urge their behests in a contrary sense; to obey both is wholly impossible. No man can serve two masters, (Mt 6:24) for to please the one amounts to contemning the other. (*Sapientiae christianae* 6)¹⁸⁸

Yielding to the temptations of the world and withdrawing one's obedience from God and the Church is a sin and a crime. We must always remember the answer of the Apostle Peter: "We must obey God rather than human beings." (Act 5:29). This makes a person better citizen. One need to be ready like the Apostles to suffer than to turn one's back to the commandments of God.

It is a high crime indeed to withdraw allegiance from God in order to please men, an act of consummate wickedness to break the laws of Jesus Christ, in order to yield obedience to earthly rulers, or, under pretext of keeping the civil law, to ignore the rights of the Church; "we ought to obey God rather than men." (Act 5:29) This answer, which of old Peter and the other Apostles were used to give the civil authorities who enjoined unrighteous things, we must, in like circumstances, give always and without hesitation. No better citizen is there, whether in time of peace or war, than the Christian who is mindful of his duty; but such a one should be ready

¹⁸⁷ *Sapientiae christianae* 3: AL 10, 14-15.

¹⁸⁸ *Sapientiae christianae* 3: AL 10, 14-15.

to suffer all things, even death itself, rather than abandon the cause of God or of the Church. (*Sapientiae christianae* 7)¹⁸⁹

Even if the one in authority is unworthy of his office, the Christian idea of public authority is that s/he is a symbol and likeness of the Divine Majesty. Since, God has not given us the spirit of fear we pay due reverence to the law from a sense of duty. One need not do so, when the law is against the Church and to the duties imposed by it.

Hallowed, therefore, in the minds of Christians is the very idea of public authority, in which they recognize some likeness and symbol as it were of the Divine Majesty, even when it is exercised by one unworthy. A just and due reverence to the laws abides in them, not from force and threats, but from a consciousness of duty; “for God hath not given us the spirit of fear.” (2 Tim 1:7) But, if the laws of the State are manifestly at variance with the divine law, containing enactments hurtful to the Church, or conveying injunctions adverse to the duties imposed by religion or if they violate in the person of the supreme Pontiff the authority of Jesus Christ, then, truly, to resist becomes a positive duty, to obey, a crime; [...]. (*Sapientiae christianae* 9,10)¹⁹⁰

For the Church to govern its people of different nations of different political, social, religious, ideological roots and background is a very difficult task. It is not uncommon to face conflicts. However, peoples need to obey the civil as well as the Church religious authorities. In general, since the duties demanded by the state are related to the development of the nation and that of the Church are related to the general welfare of the Church. Both of them have their aim as to train people to perfection.

But the exercise of such governing power is difficult, and leaves room for numberless conflicts, inasmuch as the Church rules peoples scattered through every portion of the earth, differing in race and customs, who, living under the sway of the laws of their respective countries, owe obedience alike to the civil and religious authorities. The duties enjoined are incumbent on the same persons, as already stated, and between them there exists neither contradiction nor confusion; for some of these duties have relation to the prosperity of the State, others refer to the general good of the Church, and both have as their object to train men to perfection. (*Sapientiae christianae* 25)¹⁹¹

1.10 Rule of moderation

It was Pope Leo XIII, who first added another chapter to the doctrine on the obedience that treats how to reconcile the obedience to human authority with that to the supreme authority of God. It is the doctrine of prudence of the spirit that has to preside all through the Christian life.¹⁹² Here, once again Christian spiritual wisdom of discernment is required to exercise one’s obedience in the right way.

¹⁸⁹ *Sapientiae christianae* 3: AL 10, 15.

¹⁹⁰ *Sapientiae christianae* 3: AL 10, 15-16.

¹⁹¹ *Sapientiae christianae* 13: AL 10, 27.

¹⁹² Cf J. L. GUTIÉRREZ GARCÍA, 235.

People with the spirit of obedience to God and Christ believe that the unjust violence will end and the holiness of justice will reign. So, they continue their tireless fight to defend the Church. Their love of obedience is never wavering. The Holy See desires for them the wisdom of spirit that follows the rule of moderation in guiding the human actions. This makes them take a middle path between desperate fear and presumed confidence.

Honor, then, to those who shrink not from entering the arena as often as need calls, believing and being convinced that the violence of injustice will be brought to an end and finally give way to the sanctity of right and religion! They truly seem invested with the dignity of time honored virtue, since they are struggling to defend religion, and chiefly against the faction banded together to attack Christianity with extreme daring and without tiring, and to pursue with incessant hostility the sovereign Pontiff, fallen into their power. But men of this high character maintain without wavering the love of obedience, nor are they wont to undertake anything upon their own authority. Now, since a like resolve to obey, combined with constancy and sturdy courage, is needful, so that whatever trials the pressure of events may bring about, they may be 'deficient in nothing' (Is 1.4). We greatly desire to fix deep in the minds of each one that which Paul calls the 'wisdom of the spirit' (Rom 8,6) for in controlling human actions this wisdom follows the excellent rule of moderation, with the happy result that no one either timidly despairs through lack of courage or presumes overmuch from want to prudence. (*Sapientiae christianae* 36)¹⁹³

Thomas Aquinas distinguishes the difference between the prudence that aims at common good and that of individuals. The first is of the rulers who expect the masses to follow the rules of the state. They define the political prudence of individuals as carrying out faithfully the orders of the authorities.

There is, however, a difference between the political prudence that relates to the general good and that which concerns the good of individuals. This latter is shown forth in the case of private persons who obey the prompting of right reason in the direction of their own conduct; while the former is the characteristic of those who are set over others, and chiefly of rulers of the State, whose duty it is to exercise the power of command, so that the political prudence of private individuals would seem to consist wholly in carrying out faithfully the orders issued by lawful authority. (St Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* 2-2 q.47 a.12 c.). (*Sapientiae christianae* 36)¹⁹⁴

In the writings of Pope Pius XII, appear the idea of the necessity of obedience for peace and combining the political obedience with the participation of citizens in the public life especially in the legislative process.¹⁹⁵ "History, wisely called by a great Roman "The Teacher of Life," [CICERÓN, *De oratore*, II, 36] has proved for close on two thousand years how true is the word of Scripture that he will not have peace who resists God (cf. Job ix. 4). For Christ alone is the

¹⁹³ http://w2.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_1-xiii_enc_10011890_sapientiae-christianae.html accessed on 01.09.2016 at 1.00 pm. *Sapientiae christianae* 19: AL 10, 33-34.

¹⁹⁴ *Sapientiae christianae* 19: AL 10, 34. Foot note 35 in http://w2.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_1-xiii_enc_10011890_sapientiae-christianae.html, states that St. Thomas Aquinas refers to Aristotle, *Ethic. Nic.*, Bk. VI, 8, 1141b 21-29.

¹⁹⁵ Cf J. L. GUTIÉRREZ GARCÍA, 235-36.

“Corner Stone” (Ephesians ii. 20) on which man and society can find stability and salvation.”
(*Summi pontificatus* 103)¹⁹⁶

The Christian policy is not useful neither for internal peace nor for external peace when it abandons the solid base of the objective experience and of the clear principles. It just becomes a little less than a charismatic preaching of a new social sphere, contributing to aggravate the disorientation of the wavering minds. Pope Pious XII criticizes many social experiments affecting the stability of Europe and eventually the rest of the world.

El político cristiano no sirve a la paz interna, ni, por consiguiente, a la paz exterior, cuando abandona la base sólida de la experiencia objetiva y de los claros principios y se transforma poco menos que en un pregonero carismático de una nueva tierra social, contribuyendo a agravar la desorientación de las mentes ya vacilantes. De esto se hace culpable el que cree poder hacer experimentos en el orden social y, especialmente, el que no está resuelto a hacer prevalecer en todos los grupos la legítima autoridad del Estado y la observancia de las leyes justas. ¿Es necesario acaso demostrar que la debilidad de la autoridad socava la firmeza de un país más que todas las otras dificultades, y que la debilidad de un país lleva consigo el debilitamiento de Europa y pone en peligro la paz general? (*Il popolo* 22)¹⁹⁷

With respect to this political obedience he places a new principle which introduces a new scheme of process. Expressing one's opinion about the obligations and sacrifices imposed upon is basic right of citizens. Without being listened to, they are not obliged to obey. For the security, harmony and happiness resulting from this dialogue between citizens and government can test the real strength and balance of the democracy, which are very basic for its life and development.

Manifiestar su propio parecer sobre los deberes y los sacrificios que le son impuestos, no estar obligado a obedecer sin haber sido escuchado: he ahí dos derechos del ciudadano que hallan en la democracia, como el mismo nombre indica, su expresión natural. Por la solidez, por la armonía, por los felices resultados de este contacto entre los ciudadanos y el gobierno del Estado se puede comprobar si una democracia es en realidad sana y equilibrada y cuál es su fuerza de vida y de desarrollo. (*Benignitas et humanitas* 14)¹⁹⁸

All these encyclicals above studied and others, set a trend in the Catholic Church. As we saw the examples of some social activists they touched many individuals, groups and the structures within the Church and outside the Church in their own ways and rhythms. They and their impacts paved way and formed the base of matters to be discussed in the second Vatican council. Now let us study its documents. Here also, the study of obedience is not restricted to

¹⁹⁶ *Summi pontificatus* 71: AAS 31 [1939] 448.

¹⁹⁷ *Il popolo* 22: AAS 46 [1954] 15, citado en J. L. GUTIÉRREZ GARCÍA, 236.

¹⁹⁸ *Benignitas et humanitas* 14: AAS 37 [1945] 13.

religious circle. Let us examine the theme in different spheres that touch and form the candidates such as family, civil society, seminary, priesthood, local and global Church.

2. Obedience in Vatican II

The second Vatican Council in the most of the themes and concerns it deals with has been extremely considerate by accommodating the findings of modern social, anthropological, ideological, scientific and technological studies and advancement.¹⁹⁹ At the same time, its theology and anthropology is very much biblical, patristic and rooted in tradition. This makes the council and hence the Church very much relevant to the humanity. This can be experienced and sensed almost in every point it enumerates. It blossoms forth to think beyond categorical dogmatic statements which demanded only blind obedience from the part of the lay faithful. It is down to the earth. It bases itself in the experiences of the day to day struggles of the simple people. So, it participates in the life of the people and invites them to take active participation in full freedom to be and become more human and more alive, to live the call of God in the Church and in the world. This dynamic could be seen in every occurrence of the theme of obedience also.

2.1 The Obedience - the Guide

In the decree on the apostolate of the laity *Apostolicam actuositatem* various fields of apostolates are discussed. Obedience is presented to all especially to the youth in carrying out the mission to others of their age. It is very eye opening to see the text in a very positive note approaching the youth. It acknowledges enormous, untiring and ever bubbling energy of the youth. It invites them to take very active part in the mission of the Church. There the document, effectively the Church, enters into a dialogue with the youth by appealing to orient their energy by the virtue of obedience. Here obedience is presented as a direction giving, focusing, saving, taming, forming and inspiring factor that orders the energy towards the apostolate. "If this zeal is imbued with the spirit of Christ and is inspired by obedience and love for the Church, it can be expected to be very fruitful. They should become the first to carry on the apostolate directly to other young persons, concentrating their apostolic efforts within their own circle, according to the needs of the social environment in which they live." (*Apostolicam actuositatem* 12)

¹⁹⁹ M. A. HUTCHISON, *Obedience as theme in the documents of the second Vatican council*, Durham theses, Durham University 1980. Available at Durham E-Theses Online <http://etheses.ac.uk/7263/>. It is a doctoral thesis in philosophy that approaches the theme in a dogmatic and philosophic approach.

The decree *Ad gentes* on the mission activity of the Church discusses the principles of mission in the first chapter. Mission in the Church is the continuation of Christ's mission. Therefore, the Church must follow the same path as that of Christ. His path was of poverty and obedience. It was of service and self-sacrifice unto death. "Since this mission goes on and in the course of history unfolds the mission of Christ Himself, who was sent to preach the Gospel to the poor, the Church, prompted by the Holy Spirit, must walk in the same path on which Christ walked: a path of poverty and obedience, of service and self - sacrifice to the death, from which death He came forth a victor by His resurrection." (*Ad gentes* 5)

Thus, the obedience is the path of mission of Christ and hence of the Church. It is an integral element of service and self-sacrifice unto to death. This is so effective as to make Jesus win over the power of death and enter the glory in resurrection.

Aim of the mission of the Church is that God may be glorified as it is in the mission of Christ. This is achieved when the people accept the salvific mission of Christ. This was the will and plan of God. To fulfill this plan Christ gave himself conforming himself to loving obedience to the Father. This obedient mission will make that dream of reign of God that all be one which is the plan of God and inner most longing of every human person.

Finally, by means of this missionary activity, God is fully glorified, provided that men fully and consciously accept His work of salvation, which He has accomplished in Christ. In this way and by this means, the plan of God is fulfilled - that plan to which Christ conformed with loving obedience for the glory of the Father who sent Him, that the whole human race might form one people of God and be built up into one temple of the Holy Spirit which, being the expression of brotherly harmony, corresponds with the inmost wishes of all men. (*Ad gentes* 7)

Missionaries who go on mission among the non-Christians are sent upon like Christ and the apostles on mission. They are chosen to make the life of the people as an acceptable offering to God. "Sent by legitimate authority, they [missionaries] go out in faith and obedience to those who are far from Christ. They are set apart for the work for which they have been taken up (cf. Acts 13:2), as ministers of the Gospel, "that the offering up of the Gentiles may become acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 15:16)." (*Ad gentes* 23). They need to keep one thing in mind always that the obedience of Christ has brought us salvation and it is the hallmark of the disciples of Christ. "Let [missionaries] him be convinced that obedience is the hallmark of the servant of Christ, who redeemed the human race by His obedience." (*Ad gentes* 24).

2.2 In Collaboration

The decree concerning the pastoral office of bishops in the Church *Christus Dominus* instructs the bishops to have regard for the social and civic welfare of the people along with their spiritual care. It is their necessary duty to collaborate with public authorities and to instruct, educate and form the people in obedience to the just laws and reverence for the legitimate authorities. “Assuredly, while sacred pastors devote themselves to the spiritual care of their flock, they also in fact have regard for their social and civil progress and prosperity. According to the nature of their office and as behooves bishops, they collaborate actively with public authorities for this purpose and advocate obedience to just laws and reverence for legitimately constituted authorities.” (*Christus Dominus* 9)

The declaration on religious freedom, *Dignitatis humanae* on the right of the person and of communities to social and civil freedom in religious matters, observes two extreme ways in which people live today. On the one hand, a vast majority of people are in the danger of losing their practice of acting on their own judgement, and on the other, in the name of freedom some take lightly their duty of obedience. Hence, they need to be formed from childhood in proper obedience. They must be given life examples. This formation is to discern and obey. Thus, they must become seekers of the truth and the right in collaboration with others.

Many pressures are brought to bear upon the men of our day, to the point where the danger arises lest they lose the possibility of acting on their own judgment. On the other hand, not a few can be found who seem inclined to use the name of freedom as the pretext for refusing to submit to authority and for making light of the duty of obedience. Wherefore this Vatican Council urges everyone, especially those who are charged with the task of educating others, to do their utmost to form men who, on the one hand, will respect the moral order and be obedient to lawful authority, and on the other hand, will be lovers of true freedom—men, in other words, who will come to decisions on their own judgment and in the light of truth, govern their activities with a sense of responsibility, and strive after what is true and right, willing always to join with others in cooperative effort. (*Dignitatis humanae* 9).

In the dogmatic constitution on divine revelation *Dei Verbum* following the words of St Paul, obedience of faith is defined as an entity through which humans commit their whole selves, in total liberty to God. In this act, they submit and surrender all their intellect and will to God, who deigns to reveal Himself to humanity. This is a response of humans to God who freely takes initial efforts to reveal and attracts them to respond through his grace. Thus, obedience is the first and foremost human response to the invitation of God. In other words, it could be said it is divinely induced love of God.

“The obedience of faith” (Rom. 13:26; see 1:5; 2 Cor 10:5-6) “is to be given to God who reveals, an obedience by which man commits his whole self freely to God, offering the full submission

of intellect and will to God who reveals,”²⁰⁰ and freely assenting to the truth revealed by Him. To make this act of faith, the grace of God and the interior help of the Holy Spirit must precede and assist, moving the heart and turning it to God, opening the eyes of the mind and giving “joy and ease to everyone in assenting to the truth and believing it.”²⁰¹ To bring about an ever-deeper understanding of revelation the same Holy Spirit constantly brings faith to completion by His gifts. (*Dei Verbum* 5).

Here, the council affirms the theological principle that God reveals himself and communicates with human beings. It is a free and first initiative of God. This demands the free response of humans. The Christian and Biblical anthropological principle of human freedom is also very explicit.

The pastoral constitution on the Church in the modern world *Gaudium et spes* talks about the natural law written in the conscience of human beings. It keeps them obedient to love good and avoid evil.

In the depths of his conscience, man detects a law which he does not impose upon himself, but which holds him to obedience. Always summoning him to love good and avoid evil, the voice of conscience when necessary speaks to his heart: do this, shun that. For man has in his heart a law written by God; to obey it is the very dignity of man; according to it he will be judged. (cf. Rom. 2:15-16. 9). Conscience is the most secret core and sanctuary of a man. (*Gaudium et spes* 16).

Through this inner most reality of a human person God communicates and guides the soul in the right path to choose good and avoid evil. One is accountable only to God with regard to one’s conscience. This is very well recognized and respected in the secular political realm as well. It gives room to every human person to express objection of conscience. However, in this modern market economic world it has become a very rarest thing. Well drafted and systematized sinful structures have legalized many things objectionable to human conscience. They demand by force to fulfill in the name of obligation. All, whoever they are, poor or rich, unlettered coolies or educated scientists, giant business magnet or hawkers, are pushed to face the moral, ethical and ecological dilemma pricking their conscience. However, they have no option other than to do them against their conscience for the fear of losing their job or facing dreadful consequences.

Contemplating this melancholy state of humanity, the council wishes, above all things else, to recall the permanent binding force of universal natural law and its all-embracing principles. Man’s conscience itself gives ever more emphatic voice to these principles. Therefore, actions which deliberately conflict with these same principles, as well as orders commanding such actions are criminal, and blind obedience cannot excuse those who yield to them. The most

²⁰⁰ First Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith, Chap. 3, “On Faith:” DENZINGER 1789 (3008), quoted in *Dei Verbum* 5.

²⁰¹ Second Council of Orange, Canon 7: Denzinger 180 (377); First Vatican Council, loc. cit.: DENZINGER 1791 (3010), quoted in *Dei Verbum* 5.

infamous among these are actions designed for the methodical extermination of an entire people, nation or ethnic. (*Gaudium et spes* 79). [However,] Whoever in obedience to Christ seeks first the Kingdom of God, takes there from a stronger and purer love for helping all his brethren and for perfecting the work of justice under the inspiration of charity. (*Gaudium et spes* 72).

The second Vatican Council has repeated the theological and Christological background of the obedience. It has urged in a specific form the obligation of political obedience. However, it has given conditions or requisites for the same. They consist in three types of obedience before that to the government, respect for the moral order established by God, the observation of common good in a dynamic manner, faithful and complete respect for the legal order established or to be established. (cf. *Gaudium et spes* 74: AAS 58 [1966] 1096). With these conditions, the second Vatican Council has given new expression to a fundamental point of the Christian doctrine of obedience, which has its immediate support in the natural and revealed law. The obedience indebted to any authority, may civil or religious, public or private, presupposes a superior level of obedience to God in that same authority. When this superior level is missing, primarily, it is of inferior type of obedience and it does not exist for the simple and pure reason that the sacred and divine character of the authority. Two important recommendations confirm and insist on this point. The first point attends to the limit of the political oppression. It must be within the limit that the established obligation of obedience to the objective demands of the common good must respect the moral legitimacy of the defense of the rights of the citizens. Thus, it safe guards the limits that shows the natural and evangelical law. (cf. *Gaudium et spes* 74). The second point condemns the blind obedience to the orders that impose criminal actions in the war conduct. In these cases, obeying is a crime. Not obeying is a heroic virtue. (cf. *Gaudium et spes* 79). Finally, *Dignitatis humanae* insists that the obedience to the legitimate authority and the cultivation of genuine liberty have to be combined. In the pretext of liberty, undermining the legitimate authority will not be apt. (cf. *Dignitatis humanae* 8).²⁰²

2.3 Mary the model of obedience

Mother Mary's obedience and vocation given as a model for the Church for all to imitate and imbibe in one's life according to one's status. Her obedience was the cause of the salvation. She is compared with Eve.

Rightly therefore the holy Fathers see her as used by God not merely in a passive way, but as freely cooperating in the work of human salvation through faith and obedience. For, as St. Irenaeus says, she "being obedient, became the cause of salvation for herself and for the whole human race."²⁰³ Hence not a few of the early Fathers gladly assert in their preaching, "The knot

²⁰² Cf J. L. GUTIÉRREZ GARCÍA, 236-37.

²⁰³ S. IRENAEUS, Adv. Hacr. III, 22, 4: PG 7, 9S9 A; Harvey, 2, 123. Quoted in *Lumen gentium* 56.

of Eve's disobedience was untied by Mary's obedience; what the virgin Eve bound through her unbelief, the Virgin Mary loosened by her faith."²⁰⁴ Comparing Mary with Eve, they call her "the Mother of the living,"²⁰⁵ and still more often they say: "death through Eve, life through Mary."²⁰⁶ (*Lumen gentium* 56)

By Mary's belief, obedience and undefiled faith she brought forth the Savior. She listened to God's messenger. She cooperated with a maternal love in the life of the Savior on earth. As her role in the salvation history is expounded, quoting the Fathers of the Church, she is presented as the model of obedience to all who constitute the Church.

By her belief and obedience, not knowing man but overshadowed by the Holy Spirit, as the new Eve she brought forth on earth the very Son of the Father, showing an undefiled faith, not in the word of the ancient serpent, but in that of God's messenger. The Son whom she brought forth is He, whom God placed as the first-born among many brethren, (Rom. 8, 29) namely the faithful, in whose birth and education she cooperates with a maternal love. (*Lumen gentium* 63)

2.4 Obedience in Religious life

The second Vatican council promulgates the decree on the adaptation and renewal of religious life *Perfectae caritatis*, as its esteemed and bounden duty to study and interpret the Religious life. The religious are called upon to live the evangelical counsels after the model of Christ, apart from their individual charisms. Vatican council recognizes the authority and self-government of each religious order, congregation, institute. This is mutual. They in turn must respect the Church authorities.

In like manner, these institutes may be left or committed to the charge of the proper patriarchal authority. The members of these institutes, in fulfilling their obligation to the Church due to their particular form of life, ought to show reverence and obedience to bishops according to the sacred canons. The bishops are owed this respect because of their pastoral authority in their own churches and because of the need of unity and harmony in the apostolate. (cf. 1 Thess. 5, 19). (*Lumen gentium* 45)

The sacred synod has already shown in the constitution on the Church that the pursuit of perfect charity through the evangelical counsels draws its origin from the doctrine and example of the Divine Master and reveals itself as a splendid sign of the heavenly kingdom. Now it intends to treat of the life and discipline of those institutes whose members make profession of chastity, poverty and obedience and to provide for their needs in our time. [...] Despite such a great variety of gifts, all those called by God to the practice of the evangelical counsels and who, faithfully responding to the call, undertake to observe the same, bind themselves to the Lord in a special way, following Christ, who chaste and poor (cf. Matt. 8:20; Luke 9:58) redeemed and sanctified men through obedience even to the death of the Cross (cf. Phil. 2:8). (*Perfectae caritatis* 1)

²⁰⁴ S. IRENAEUS, ib.; Harvey, 2, 124. Quoted in *Lumen gentium* 56.

²⁰⁵ S. EPIPHANIUS, Nacr. 78, 18: PG 42, 728 CD; 729 AB. Quoted in *Lumen gentium* 56.

²⁰⁶ S. HIERONYMUS, Epist. 22, 21: PL 22, 408. Cfr. S. AUGUSTINUS, Serm. 51, 2, 3: PL 38, 33S; Serm. 232, 2: col. 1108. - S. CYRILLUS Hieros., Catech. 12, 15: PG 33, 741 AB. - S. Io. Chrysostomus, In Ps. 44, 7: PG 55, 193. - S. Io. Damascenus, Nom. 2 in dorm. B.M.V., 3: PG 96, 728. Quoted in *Lumen gentium* 56.

The service they exercise according to their individual multiplicity of their charism must inspire them to practice a life of humility and obedience. This makes them participants in the self-emptying life and spirit of Jesus. “This service of God ought to inspire and foster in them the exercise of the virtues, especially humility, obedience, fortitude and chastity. In such a way, they share in Christ’s emptying of Himself (cf. Phil. 2:7) and His life in the spirit (cf. Rom. 8:1-13).” (*Perfectae caritatis* 5)

This general exhortation is followed by the presentation of each counsel. To explain the counsel of obedience it very much employs the life of Jesus, especially the dimension of his assuming the nature of a slave in obedience on the Cross, to make us sons, daughters and heirs of God. So, the religious must be guided by the Spirit to offer their lives for the salvation of the people of God. Through their obedient service, their labour attains the humility of Christ. So, they obey their superiors according to their respective constitutions. They offer up in obedience their intellect, will and all their natural and supernatural gifts in building up the Church, in such a way that their human dignity be fully perfected.

In professing obedience, religious offer the full surrender of their own will as a sacrifice of themselves to God and so are united permanently and securely to God’s salvific will. After the example of Jesus Christ who came to do the will of the Father (cf. John 4:34; 5:30; Heb. 10:7; Ps. 39:9) and “assuming the nature of a slave” (Phil. 2:7) learned obedience in the school of suffering (cf. Heb. 5:8), religious under the motion of the Holy Spirit, subject themselves in faith to their superiors who hold the place of God. Under their guidance they are led to serve all their brothers in Christ, just as Christ himself in obedience to the Father served His brethren and laid down His life as a ransom for many (cf. Matt. 20:28; John 10:14-18). So, they are closely bound to the service of the Church and strive to attain the measure of the full manhood of Christ (Eph. 4:13).

Religious, therefore, in the spirit of faith and love for the divine will should humbly obey their superiors according to their rules and constitutions. Realizing that they are contributing to building up the body of Christ according to God’s plan, they should use both the forces of their intellect and will and the gifts of nature and grace to execute the commands and fulfill the duties entrusted to them. In this way, religious obedience, far from lessening the dignity of the human person, by extending the freedom of the sons of God, leads it to maturity. (*Perfectae caritatis* 14)

On the part of the Superiors, they must be aware that they are accountable to God with respect to the life and mission of their subjects. They discharge their duties respecting the liberty of each individual. They must dialogue with them and make them participate in the mission actively. In all these, they must not lose their responsibility of the service of the leadership to the Church. This aspect of authority and obedience is further developed and sharpened in later documents. “La Instrucción sobre el Servicio de la autoridad y la obediencia²⁰⁷ se apoya en

²⁰⁷ Cf. CONGREGATION FOR INSTITUTES OF CONSECRATED LIFE AND SOCIETIES OF APOSTOLIC LIFE, *The service of authority and obedience*, 11 May 2008.

documentos anteriores de la Congregación para los Institutos de Vida Consagrada y las Sociedades de Vida Apostólica, y en la Exhortación Apostólica²⁰⁸ postsinodal de Juan Pablo II, *Vita Consecrata*.”²⁰⁹

Superiors, as those who are to give an account of the souls entrusted to them (Heb. 13:17), should fulfill their office in a way responsive to God’s will. They should exercise their authority out of a spirit of service to the brethren, expressing in this way the love with which God loves their subjects. They should govern these as sons of God, respecting their human dignity. In this way, they make it easier for them to subordinate their wills. They should be particularly careful to respect their subjects’ liberty in the matters of sacramental confession and the direction of conscience. Subjects should be brought to the point where they will cooperate with an active and responsible obedience in undertaking new tasks and in carrying those already undertaken. And so, superiors should gladly listen to their subjects and foster harmony among them for the good of the community and the Church, provided that thereby their own authority to decide and command what has to be done is not harmed. (*Perfectae caritatis* 14)

Chapters of the congregation must exercise their authority in ruling with due concern for the good of the community and each member. “Chapters and deliberative bodies should faithfully discharge the part in ruling entrusted to them and each should in its own way express that concern for the good of the entire community which all its members share.” (*Perfectae caritatis* 14)

2.5 Priests and seminarians

The decree on priestly training *Optatam totius* hints at the formation in obedience as the important element. “With a particular concern should they be so formed in priestly obedience, in a simple way of life and in the spirit of self-denial that they are accustomed to giving up willingly even those things which are permitted but are not expedient, and to conform themselves to Christ crucified.” (*Optatam totius* 9). Further it instructs that the seminarians “are to be made clearly aware of the burdens they will be undertaking, and no problem of the priestly life is to be concealed from them.” (*Optatam totius* 9). This formation must prepare them to live and lead the Church towards a renovation of the ecclesiastical structure. “Hemos insistido repetidas veces en otro cambio profundo – Y. Congar lo ha llamado copernicano-introducido por el concilio con la inserción del cap. II sobre el pueblo de Dios en LG antes del cap. III sobre el ministerio eclesiástico.”²¹⁰ They must be prepared for the new officially recognized universal nature of the Church and its mission. “Para K. Rahner el cambio

²⁰⁸ Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Vita consecrata*. Apostolic Exhortation on consecrated life, 25 March 1996.

²⁰⁹ M. ARETIO, “Aspectos jurídicos de la instrucción del servicio de la autoridad y la obediencia”: *Ius Canonicum*, 49 (2009) 653-673. 655. This article comments on: CONGREGATION FOR INSTITUTES OF CONSECRATED LIFE AND SOCIETIES OF APOSTOLIC LIFE, *The service of authority and obedience*, 11 May 2008.

²¹⁰ A. ANTÓN, *Eclesiología posconciliar* en R. LATOURELLE (ED), *Vaticano II: balance y perspectivas. Veinticinco años después (1962-1987)*, Ediciones Sígueme, Salamanca 1989, 275-294, 279.

verdaderamente transcendental introducido por el Vaticano II en la Iglesia y en la eclesiología posconciliar consiste en que éste es el primer concilio en el que la Iglesia se realiza consciente y oficialmente como Iglesia universal.”²¹¹

Now let us go outside the documents of the Vatican II, and consider the post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Pastores dabo vobis* of Pope John Paul II, on the formation of priests in the circumstances of the present day.²¹² The very opening words touch the core existence of the Church, the priestly celebration of the Eucharist, in accordance to the commandment of Christ at the last supper.

Without priests the Church would not be able to live that fundamental obedience which is at the very heart of her existence and her mission in history, an obedience in response to the command of Christ: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations” (*Mt.* 28:19) and “Do this in remembrance of me” (*Lk.* 22:19; cf. *1 Cor.* 11.24), i.e., an obedience to the command to announce the Gospel and to renew daily the sacrifice of the giving of his body and the shedding of his blood for the life of the world. (*Pastores dabo vobis* 1)

John Paul II warns, like his predecessors, of distorted sense of freedom that is taken as blind following of one’s instinctive forces, not adhering to universal truths of highly deemed values and principles. This affects the younger generation even in the important decision making moments. They do not reject God, but act as if God does not exist. Eventually, they do not even recognize the deep meaning of the vocation to priesthood that it is free and responsible giving of oneself entirely in service to God and fellow humans.

In the case of some young people a distorted sense of freedom lies at the root of these tendencies. Instead of being understood as obedience to objective and universal truth, freedom is lived out as a blind acquiescence to instinctive forces and to an individual’s will to power. Therefore, on the level of thought and behavior, it is almost natural to find an erosion of internal consent to ethical principles. On the religious level, such a situation, if it does not always lead to an explicit refusal of God, causes widespread indifference and results in a life which, even in its more significant moments and more decisive choices, is lived as if God did not exist. In this context, it is difficult not only to respond fully to a vocation to the priesthood but even to understand its very meaning as a special witness to the primacy of “being” over “having,” and as a recognition that the significance of life consists in a free and responsible giving of oneself to others, a willingness to place oneself entirely at the Service of the Gospel and the kingdom of God as a priest. (*Pastores dabo vobis* 8)

²¹¹ Cf. K. RAHNER, *Die bleibende Bedeutung des II Vatikanischen Konzils*: *StimZ* 197 (1979) 796, citado en A. ANTÓN, 279.

²¹² JOHN PAUL II, *Pastores dabo vobis*. Post-synodal apostolic exhortation on the Formation of priests in the circumstances of the present day, March 25th 1992. Quotes are taken from: http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_25031992_pastores-dabo-vobis.html accessed on 09.10.2016 at 6.00 pm.

The apostolic exhortation reminds the pastors of the service leadership they need to offer to the Church. They must not dislike nor detest this servant attitude, rather they must be models to the community of faithful in service to bring the fullness of life and total liberation.

As St. Augustine once reminded a bishop on the day of his ordination: “He who is head of the people must in the first place realize that he is to be the servant of many. And he should not disdain being such; I say it once again, he should not disdain being the servant of many, because the Lord of Lords did not disdain to make himself our servant.”²¹³[...] In this way, the priests, as the ministers, the “elders” of the community, will be in their person the “model” of the flock, which for its part is called to display this same priestly attitude of service toward the world - in order to bring to humanity the fullness of life and complete liberation. (*Pastores dabo vobis* 21)

The obedience they live is ‘apostolic’, that is to say that it is practiced in loving service to the Church in the hierarchical structure. The bishops deserve a filial respect and obedience. The obedience and submission shown towards the authorities is not at all any humiliation. It is a sign of responsible freedom of the priest who receives and accepts the same grace of discernment and responsibility in the ecclesial decisions that Jesus assured to his apostles.

First of all, obedience is “apostolic” in the sense that it recognizes, loves and serves the Church in her hierarchical structure. [...] “filial respect and obedience” [...] This “submission” to those invested with ecclesial authority is in no way a kind of humiliation. It flows instead from the responsible freedom of the priest who accepts not only the demands of an organized and organic ecclesial life, but also that grace of discernment and responsibility in ecclesial decisions which was assured by Jesus to his apostles and their successors [...]. (*Pastores dabo vobis* 28)

An important characteristic of the authentic Christian obedience is that it is lived without cravenness and slavishness. This helps the priest discharge his authority without authoritarianism. It reaffirmed that only the person who knows how to obey can deserve obedience.

Authentic Christian obedience, when it is properly motivated and lived without servility, helps the priest to exercise in accordance with the Gospel the authority entrusted to him for his work with the People of God: an authority free from authoritarianism or demagoguery. Only the person who knows how to obey in Christ can really able to require obedience from others in accordance with the Gospel. (*Pastores dabo vobis* 28)

The priestly obedience is not merely of an individual, but it is communitarian. This is of the office of the community of presbyterate to cooperate and collaborate in mission with the bishop and the Pope. “Priestly obedience has also a “community” dimension: It is not the obedience of an individual who alone relates to authority, but rather an obedience which is deeply a part

²¹³ Sermo Morini Guelferbytanus, 32, 1: PLS 2, 637. Quoted in *Pastores dabo vobis* 21.

of the unity of the presbyterate, which as such is called to cooperate harmoniously with the bishop and, through him, with Peter's successor."²¹⁴ (*Pastores dabo vobis* 28)

This [communitarian] aspect of the priest's obedience demands a marked spirit of asceticism, both in the sense of a tendency not to become too bound up in one's own preferences or points of view and in the sense of giving brother priests the opportunity to make good use of their talents, and abilities, setting aside all forms of jealousy, envy and rivalry. Priestly obedience should be one of solidarity, based on belonging to a single presbyterate. Within the presbyterate, this obedience is expressed in co-responsibility regarding directions to be taken and choices to be made. (*Pastores dabo vobis* 28)

Priestly obedience is lived pastorally. This pastoral dimension demands the total person. The priest is almost totally 'consumed' in the service. His life is poured out in loving service. However, this total self-giving in mission needs to be reasonable. Periodic evaluation protects the Church, parish and the priest from self-deception.

Finally, priestly obedience has a particular "pastoral" character. It is lived in an atmosphere of constant readiness to allow oneself to be taken up, as it were "consumed," by the needs and demands of the flock. These last ought to be truly reasonable and at times they need to be evaluated and tested to see how genuine they are. (*Pastores dabo vobis* 28)

In a priest, human maturity and affective maturity needs a deep training in freedom. This freedom makes one to obey the real self which leads to an integral self-realization.

Human maturity, and in particular affective maturity, requires a clear and strong training in freedom, which expresses itself in convinced and heartfelt obedience to the "truth of one's own being, to the "meaning" of one's own existence, that is to the "sincere gift of self" as the way and fundamental content of the authentic realization of self."²¹⁵ (*Pastores dabo vobis* 44)

The responsible freedom has also to do with moral conscience. Education and formation of it helps on to obey moral obligations from the depth of one's being. Hence, the obedience emerges as a free consequence of loving response to the will and love of God.

Intimately connected with formation to responsible freedom is education of the moral conscience. Such education calls from the depths of one's own "self" obedience to moral obligations and at the same time reveals the deep meaning of such obedience. It is a conscious and free response, and therefore a loving response, to God's demands, to God's love. (*Pastores dabo vobis* 44)

Now let us go back once again to the documents of Vatican II and consider the decree on the ministry and life of priests *Presbyterorum ordinis* that instructs the priests to be conscious of the fullness of priesthood of the bishops and to obey them. They must stand by and collaborate in the mission with the bishops. "Priests, never losing sight of the fullness of the priesthood

²¹⁴ Cf. *Presbyterorum ordinis*, 15. Quoted in *Pastores dabo vobis* 28.

²¹⁵ Cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, 24. Quoted in *Pastores dabo vobis* 44.

which the bishops enjoy, must respect in them the authority of Christ, the Supreme Shepherd. They must therefore stand by their bishops in sincere charity and obedience.²¹⁶ This priestly obedience, imbued with a spirit of cooperation is based on the very sharing in the episcopal ministry which is conferred on priests both through the Sacrament of Orders and the canonical mission.”²¹⁷ (*Presbyterorum ordinis* 7)

It proposes some ‘special spiritual requirements in the life of a priest’. First and foremost a frame of mind and soul to know and do God’s will. He serves all with this humble deposition.

Among the virtues that priests must possess for their sacred ministry none is so important as a frame of mind and soul whereby they are always ready to know and do the will of him who sent them and not their own will. (Cf. Jn 4:34; 5:30; 6:38) The divine task that they are called by the Holy Spirit to fulfill (Cf. Acts 13:2) surpasses all human wisdom and human ability. “God chooses the weak things of the world to confound the strong.” (1 Cor 1:27). Aware of his own weakness, the true minister of Christ works in humility trying to do what is pleasing to God. (Cf. Eph 5:10). Filled with the Holy Spirit, (Cf. Acts 20:22) he is guided by him who desires the salvation of all men. He understands this desire of God and follows it in the ordinary circumstances of his everyday life. With humble disposition, he waits upon all whom God has sent him to serve in the work assigned to him and in the multiple experiences of his life. (*Presbyterorum ordinis* 15)

This openness to the will of God, naturally opens up a way to be in union with the Mother Church, fellow priests and bishops in authority. It proposes that let them receive and execute every order with a great spirit of faith, even if they are small and unrecognized. They could even exhaust themselves in it.

However, the priestly ministry, since it is the ministry of the Church itself, can only function in the hierarchical union of the whole body. Pastoral charity, therefore, urges priests, as they operate in the framework of this union, to dedicate their own will by obedience to the service of God and their fellow men. In a great spirit of faith, let them receive and execute whatever orders the holy father, their own bishop, or other superiors give or recommend. With a willing heart let them spend and even exhaust themselves (Cf. 2 Cor 12:15) in whatever task they are given, even though it be menial and unrecognized. (*Presbyterorum ordinis* 15)

This obedience they show towards the authorities promotes the mature freedom of the children of God. They must also enthusiastically propose new plans and projects of missions with open disposition to accept the decision of those in authority. This responsible obedience with inner freedom of the children of God conforms them to Christ in his obedience and humility.

They must preserve and strengthen a necessary oneness with their brothers in the ministry, especially with those whom God has selected as visible rulers of his Church. For in this way they are laboring to build the Body of Christ which grows “through every gesture of service.” (Cf. Eph 4:11-16) This obedience is designed to promote the mature freedom of the children of

²¹⁶ Cf. PAUL VI, allocution to the family heads of Rome and Lenten speakers, March 1, 1965, in the Sistine Hall: AAS 57 (1965), p 326. Quoted in *Presbyterorum ordinis* 7.

²¹⁷ Cf. Constitutions of the Apostles, VIII 47, 39: (ed. F.X. Funk, p 577). Quoted in *Presbyterorum ordinis* 7.

God; by its very nature it postulates that in the carrying out of their work, spurred on by charity, they develop new approaches and methods for the greater good of the Church. With enthusiasm and courage, let priests propose new projects and strive to satisfy the needs of their flocks. Of course, they must be ready to submit to the decisions of those who rule the Church of God. By this humility and by willing responsible obedience, priests conform themselves to Christ. (*Presbyterorum ordinis* 15)

2.6 Obedience – Fruit of familiar dialogue

The dogmatic constitution on the church *Lumen gentium* reflects on the redemption that Jesus brought to the humanity by his obedience. “To carry out the will of the Father, Christ inaugurated the Kingdom of heaven on earth and revealed to us the mystery of that kingdom. By His obedience He brought about redemption. The Church, or, in other words, the kingdom of Christ now present in mystery, grows visibly through the power of God in the world.” (*Lumen gentium* 3). The people of God share in the mission of Christ, by their witnessing life, they share also in the prophetic mission. The discernment in the life of faith is kindled and supported by the spirit of the truth. For this life, they need obedience to the teaching of the Church as to the word of God. They obey their spiritual shepherds as representatives of Christ. Their model of obedience is Christ himself. “El Concilio Vaticano II ha sido el primer Concilio Ecu­mé­nico que, en la historia de la Iglesia, se ha ocupado de los cristianos laicos -utilizando el término laico en sentido teológico, no en sentido sociopolítico.” (cf. *Lumen gentium* 31)²¹⁸

The holy people of God shares also in Christ’s prophetic office; it spreads abroad a living witness to Him, especially by means of a life of faith and charity and by offering to God a sacrifice of praise, the tribute of lips which give praise to His name. [...] That discernment in matters of faith is aroused and sustained by the Spirit of truth. It is exercised under the guidance of the sacred teaching authority, in faithful and respectful obedience to which the people of God accepts that which is not just the word of men but truly the word of God. (cf. 1 Thess. 2, 13.) Through it, the people of God adheres unwaveringly to the faith given once and for all to the saints, (cf. Jud. 3) penetrates it more deeply with right thinking, and applies it more fully in its life. (*Lumen gentium* 12). The laity should, as all Christians, promptly accept in Christian obedience decisions of their spiritual shepherds, since they are representatives of Christ as well as teachers and rulers in the Church. Let them follow the example of Christ, who by His obedience even unto death, opened to all men the blessed way of the liberty of the children of God. (*Lumen gentium* 37)

Role of the spiritual shepherds: The very term ‘spiritual shepherds’ which appears four times (*Lumen gentium* 37, 41) is very evocative indicating a newer understanding of the leadership in the Church. The spiritual shepherds must recognize and promote the dignity and responsibility of the laity. They must listen to them and willingly take into consideration their

²¹⁸ R. PELLITERO, “La identidad de los cristianos laicos a la luz del Concilio Vaticano II”: *Scripta Theologica* 47 (2015) 483-506. 484.

advice. With due freedom, they must be allowed to do jobs assigned to them as well as jobs of their own initiative.

Let the spiritual shepherds recognize and promote the dignity as well as the responsibility of the laity in the Church. Let them willingly employ their prudent advice. Let them confidently assign duties to them in the service of the Church, allowing them freedom and room for action. Further, let them encourage lay people so that they may undertake tasks on their own initiative. Attentively in Christ, let them consider with fatherly love the projects, suggestions and desires proposed by the laity. However, let the shepherds respectfully acknowledge that just freedom which belongs to everyone in this earthly city. (*Lumen gentium* 37)

The spiritual leaders and laity form a community of dialogue to foster mission and Christian witnessing in all levels. The ambience of dialogue makes the laity offer their resources for the mission. On the part of the spiritual leaders, they can decide to perform better in all their endeavors.

A great many wonderful things are to be hoped for from this familiar dialogue between the laity and their spiritual leaders: in the laity, a strengthened sense of personal responsibility; a renewed enthusiasm; a more ready application of their talents to the projects of their spiritual leaders. The latter, on the other hand, aided by the experience of the laity, can more clearly and more incisively come to decisions regarding both spiritual and temporal matters. In this way, the whole Church, strengthened by each one of its members, may more effectively fulfill its mission for the life of the world. (*Lumen gentium* 37)

Lumen gentium discusses generally on religious life and in detail later in the decree on the adaptation and renewal of religious life *Perfectae caritatis*. The council affirms the origin and base of the life of evangelic counsels is Jesus himself. They are divine gifts given to the Church. Therefore, the council deems it as its bounden duty to interpret them as the Holy Spirit inspires and guides them to do.

The evangelical counsels of chastity dedicated to God, poverty and obedience are based upon the words and examples of the Lord. They were further commanded by the apostles and Fathers of the Church, as well as by the doctors and pastors of souls. The counsels are a divine gift, which the Church received from its Lord and which it always safeguards with the help of His grace. Church authority has the duty, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, of interpreting these evangelical counsels, of regulating their practice and finally to build on them stable forms of living. (*Lumen gentium* 43)

Their obedience strengthens them to support the Church and all its members. “They further offer their members the support of fraternal association in the militia of Christ and of liberty strengthened by obedience.”²¹⁹ (*Lumen gentium* 43)

²¹⁹ Cfr. PIUS XI, Litt. Encycl. Quadragesimo anno 15 maii 1931: AAS 23 (1931) p. 121 s. Pius XII, Alloc. De quelle consolation, 14 oct. 1951: AAS 43 (1951) p. 790 s. quoted in *Lumen gentium* 43.

2.7 Obedience and Lay faithful

Post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Christifideles laici*²²⁰ of his holiness John Paul II, on the vocation and the mission of the lay faithful in the church and in the world, is one of the first of its kind that deals with the missionary vocation of the lay faithful. It defines the objective of their individual and group efforts in the service of the Lord and of the Church as “In this sense whatever association of the lay faithful there might be, it is always called to be more of an instrument leading to holiness in the Church, through fostering and promoting “a more intimate unity between the everyday life of its members and their faith”²²¹ (*Christifideles laici*, 30)

This mission of faith proclamation must be based on sound knowledge of the truth as defined by the magisterium of the Church, on Christ, the Church and humanity.

The responsibility of professing the Catholic faith, embracing and proclaiming the truth about Christ, the Church and humanity, in obedience to the Church’s Magisterium, as the Church interprets it. For this reason, every association of the lay faithful must be a forum where the faith is proclaimed as well as taught in its total content. (Christifideles laici, 30)

They receive the mission mandate from that of Christ given in the gospel to the apostles. This command must be received readily and generously listened to, all the more in today’s context. Indwelling of the Holy Spirit, collaboration of all members and co-responsibility of the laity are gifts and promises of Vatican II.²²²

Certainly, the command of Jesus: “Go and preach the Gospel” always maintains its vital value and its ever-pressing obligation. Nevertheless, the *present situation*, not only of the world but also of many parts of the Church, *absolutely demands that the word of Christ receive a more ready and generous obedience*. Every disciple is personally called by name; no disciple can withhold making a response: “Woe to me, if I do not preach the gospel” (*1 Cor 9:16*). (*Christifideles laici*, 33)

Diverse forms of secular institutes offer the possibility of professing evangelical counsel through vows of promises. Synod fathers believe these newer forms and structures are works of the Holy Spirit to inspire people in self-giving.

In the field of a “commonly shared” lay vocation “special” lay vocations flourish. In this area, we can also recall the spiritual experience of the flourishing of diverse forms of secular institutes that have developed recently in the Church. These offer the lay faithful, and even

²²⁰ JOHN PAUL II, *Christifideles laici*, Apostolic exhortation, 30 Dec 1988. Accessed from http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_30121988_christifideles-laici.html. Accessed on 15.09.2016 at 10.00 am.

²²¹ Conc. Ecum. Vat. II, Dec. sobre el apostolado de los laicos *Apostolicam actuositatem*, 19. Quoted in *Christifideles laici*, 30.

PETER N.V. HAI, *Sentire cum ecclesia: Laity and the Call to Holiness in Papal and Local Theologies: Australian Catholic Record*, 333-348, 334, 348.

²²² Cf. G. GOOSEN, “Laity and the promises of Vatican II”: *Compass* 46 (2011) 38-45, 39-40.

priests, the possibility of professing the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience through vows or promises, while fully maintaining one's lay or clerical state.²²³ In this regard, the Synod Fathers have commented, "The Holy Spirit stirs up other forms of self-giving to which people who remain fully in the lay state devote themselves."²²⁴ (*Christifideles laici*, 56)

All parishes, both in established regions and in mission territory, find it difficult to do their mission for lack of personnel or monetary resources. In order to make all the parishes really Christian community the local Church authorities must promote the following: Participation of lay faithful in pastoral responsibilities such as basic Christian communities where people share wonder of God in service and love and Cooperation even in the institutional level for the renewal of the parishes. "[T]he more effective the leader of a group is the less the group will look like him. Perhaps it could be said that the stronger the ministry of God's people becomes the less that ministry will be controlled by church leadership and the more varied and unrecognizable it will often be."²²⁵

The Synod Fathers for their part have given much attention to the present state of many parishes and have called for a *greater effort in their renewal*: "Many parishes, whether established in regions affected by urban progress or in missionary territory, cannot do their work effectively because they lack material resources or ordained men or are too big geographically or because of the particular circumstances of some Christians (e.g. exiles and migrants). So that all parishes of this kind may be truly communities of Christians, local ecclesial authorities ought to foster the following: *a*) adaptation of parish structures according to the full flexibility granted by canon law, especially in promoting participation by the lay faithful in pastoral responsibilities; *b*) small, basic or so-called "living" communities, where the faithful can communicate the Word of God and express it in service and love to one another; these communities are true expressions of ecclesial communion and centers of evangelization, in communion with their pastors"²²⁶ For the renewal of parishes and for a better assurance of their effectiveness in work, various forms of cooperation even on the institutional level ought to be fostered among diverse parishes in the same area. (*Christifideles laici*,)

In doing this, the people and the authorities bear in mind that this freedom to form lay groups with the aim of communion and mission in the parish flows from the sacrament of Baptism, not from any 'concession' of those in authority. They have the right to found new groups and to join any already existing groups. Canon law No. 215 affirms this right. "In what would constitute one of its major achievements Vatican II would describe the lay faithful in positive terms, not as subordinates and non-clerics, but as members of the people of God sharing equally, by virtue of their baptism, in the salvific mission of the church."²²⁷

²²³ Cf Pío XII, Const. Ap. Provida Mater (2 Febrero 1947): AAS 39 (1947) 114-124; C.I.C., can. 573. Quoted in *Christifideles laici* 54.

²²⁴ *Propositio* 6. Quoted in *Christifideles laici* 54.

²²⁵ R. BLUMHORST, "The ministry of the laity: Moving from concept to practice": *Currents in theology and mission* 2 (1975) 189-192, 192.

²²⁶ PABLO VI, Discurso al Clero romano (24 Junio 1963): AAS 55 (1963) 674. Quoted in *Christifideles laici*, 56.

²²⁷ A. HUNT, "Vatican II and the Laity: Vision, Challenges and Opportunities": *The Australasian Catholic Record* 91 (2014) 3-20, 4.

First of all, the *freedom for lay people in the Church to form such groups* is to be acknowledged. Such liberty is a true and proper right that is not derived from any kind of “concession” by authority, but flows from the Sacrament of Baptism, which calls the lay faithful to participate actively in the Church’s communion and mission. In this regard the Council is quite clear: “As long as the proper relationship is kept to Church authority, the lay faithful have the right to found and run such associations and to join those already existing”.²²⁸ A citation from the recently published Code of Canon Law affirms it as well: “The Christian faithful are at liberty to found and govern associations for charitable and religious purposes or for the promotion of the Christian vocation in the world; they are free to hold meetings to pursue these purposes in common”.²²⁹ (*Christifideles laici*, 29)

The aspect of freedom is insisted. Bill Hull reminds us that the pastor “is called to work with the strong more than the weak, and that by training the well, he/she takes better care of and strengthens the weak.”²³⁰ This has to be acknowledged and guaranteed by authorities. The groups have the responsibility to exercise this freedom in relation to the communion and mission of the Church. “In exceedingly trying circumstances, the laity do what they can to take the place of priests, risking their freedom and sometimes their lives to teach Christian doctrine to those around them, to train them in a religious way of life and a Catholic mentality, to lead them to receive the sacraments frequently, and to develop their piety, especially toward the Eucharist.”²³¹

It is a question of a freedom that is to be acknowledged and guaranteed by ecclesial authority and always and only to be exercised in Church communion. Consequently, the right of the lay faithful to form groups is essentially in relation to the Church’s life of communion and to her mission. (*Christifideles laici*, 29)

3. Mutuality in *Amoris laetitia*

In the post-synodal apostolic exhortation of Pope Francis, *Amoris laetitia*²³² ‘on love in the family’ is a call to celebrate mutuality – mutuality of love, sacrifice, self-giving and all the positive elements one could imagine of the human divine life in a family. Now the paper focus on the obedience and representation in the family as expressed in the encyclical. It is strange that the word obedience appears only once, that too reminds us of Jesus’ obedience to his parents on earth. Traditionally heard terms such as ‘obedience of wife to husband’, children to parents and elders are not at all found. This has been replaced by a magical word viz. ‘mutual’. Therefore, in the following pages let us examine the term mutual in the encyclical to draw some

²²⁸ Conc. Ecum. Vat. II, Dec. sobre el apostolado de los laicos *Apostolicam actuositatem*, 19. Cf. también Ibid., 15; Id., Const. dogm. sobre la Iglesia *Lumen gentium*, 37. Quoted in (*Christifideles laici*, 29).

²²⁹ C.I.C., can. 215. Quoted in (*Christifideles laici*, 29).

²³⁰ B. HULL, *The Disciple Making Pastor*, Fleming H. Revell, Old Tapan, NJ 1988, 74. Quoted in J. F. REED, “The Liberation of Laity for Leadership”: *The Covenant Quarterly* 50 (1992) 108-120, 119.

²³¹ W. M. ABBOT, S.J. ED. *The Documents Of Vatican II*, Herder and Herder & Association Press, New York 1966, 507-8. Quoted in T. ZATEL, “Towards a Theology of the Laity: A Proposal for Understanding the Laity”: *Asia Journal of Theology* 27 (2013) 131-143.

²³² Hence forth mentioned as *AL* with respective number.

insight on the mutual living of the sacrament of marriage in a family, society and in its preparation, in accompanying them in their rough and troubled moments as expressed in it.

3.1 *Mysticism of mutuality*

The spirituality of family is of the bond between its members in which God makes His delightful abode. In and through recognition of gifts one deepens the communion in the family that brings human and divine together.

In that variety of gifts and encounters which deepen communion, God has his dwelling place. This mutual concern “brings together the human and the divine”,²³³ for it is filled with the love of God. In the end, marital spirituality is a spirituality of the bond, in which divine love dwells. (AL 315)

A life thus lived in mutual love in a family is ‘a true path to daily sanctification and mystical growth’. Love of neighbor and the social dimension of human nature is primarily and basically expressed in married couple and family. Communion of the family must be seen ‘as a path which the Lord is using to lead them to the heights of mystical union.’

A positive experience of family communion is a true path to daily sanctification and mystical growth, a means for deeper union with God. The fraternal and communal demands of family life are an incentive to growth in openness of heart and thus to an ever fuller encounter with the Lord. [...] Benedict XVI pointed out that “closing our eyes to our neighbour also blinds us to God”,²³⁴ [...] “the first and basic expression of that social dimension of the person is the married couple and the family”,²³⁵ spirituality becomes incarnate in the communion of the family. Hence, those who have deep spiritual aspirations should not feel that the family detracts from their growth in the life of the Spirit, but rather see it as a path which the Lord is using to lead them to the heights of mystical union. (AL 316)

Thus, the communion elevates the vocation of the family to ‘resolve to be a part of God’s dream, to choose to dream with him, to want to build with him, to join him in this saga of building a world where no one will feel alone’.

The two are thus mutual reflections of that divine love which comforts with a word, a look, a helping hand, a caress, an embrace. For this reason, “to want to form a family is to resolve to be a part of God’s dream, to choose to dream with him, to want to build with him, to join him in this saga of building a world where no one will feel alone.”²³⁶ (AL 321)

²³³ Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, 49. Quoted in AL 315.

²³⁴ Encyclical Letter *Deus Caritas Est* (25 December 2015), 16: AAS 98 (2006), 230. Quoted in AL 316.

²³⁵ JOHN PAUL II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici* (30 December 1988), 40: AAS 81 (1989), 468. Quoted in AL 316.

²³⁶ Address at the Prayer Vigil of the Festival of Families, Philadelphia (26 September 2015): *L’Osservatore Romano*, 28-29 September 2015, p. 6. Quoted in AL 321.

4. Dialogue in *Laudato si'*

Dialogue in encyclical letter *Laudato si'*²³⁷ of the Holy Father Francis on care for our common home captures one's attention. The Church has been experiencing a gradual growth in the understanding and exercising of authority and obedience in and through its active involvement in the joys and struggles of humanity and the nature. In beginning years, as the Church was growing in number, it faced a lot of practical problems. The council of Jerusalem was held to discuss, clarify and come to a concrete conclusion regarding matters of faith and other cultural practices. This set a trend in the Church. The decisions were made known to all communities in different parts of the world for the faithful to hear, obey and live by them. The words employed in the recently promulgated encyclicals of pope Francis capture my attention to get the glimpse of this gradual but at the same time a very radical attitudinal change from the part of the Roman Pontiff. He writes in *Laudato Si'*, "In my Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, I wrote to all the members of the Church with the aim of encouraging ongoing missionary renewal. In this Encyclical, I would like to enter into dialogue with all people about our common home." (LS 3). "I urgently appeal, then, for a new dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet. We need a conversation which includes everyone, since the environmental challenge we are undergoing, and its human roots, concern and affect us all." (LS 14). "In light of this reflection, I will advance some broader proposals for dialogue and action which would involve each of us as individuals, and also affect international policy." (LS 15). Here, I would like to underline following words and phrases 'encouraging', 'enter into dialogue', 'conversation which includes everyone' and 'involve each of us'. He has quoted in traditional sources and unconventional sources like a Sufi Mystic, Rio Declaration from 1992 and Earth Charter 2000. Here, in this document, the term obedience does not appear at all. Where all one may expect traditional expressions such as 'obedience to the Creator', 'obedience to the law of revelation and of nature' there appear words like dialogue, mutual relationship etc. They express some of the sublime attitudes such as openness, inclusiveness, dialogue, learning from others, standing under to understand that the encyclical and the Papacy of Pope Francis possess in particular and in general that of the future Church he envisages.

²³⁷ Hence forth it is mentioned as LS. Pdf copy is available on: https://www.google.es/webhp?sourceid=chrome-instant&rlz=1C1EJFA_enES674ES674&ion=1&espv=2&ie=UTF-8#q=laudato%20si%20pdf accessed on 20.09.2016 at 4.00 pm. papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si_en.pdf

5. Conclusion

The Popes who have been showing God's loving guidance in leading the Church in a tangible way have left no stones unturned to come out with appropriate teachings to address any problem that the faithful face. Their encyclicals are prophetic against the ungodly and inhuman ways in which the world runs. Each of them is a clarion call for immediate actions towards change. They are warnings against the unjust, blind, inhuman laws and structures that deprive of full human potential of raising oneself to one's transcendental origin and aim of human life in this world and that of the whole cosmos. They call all peoples to guard themselves against them by virtue of obedience and by duties adhering to the will of God. Pre-Vatican II documents predominantly presented, according to its time, in Thomistic philosophical and theological manner. A notable gradual change in themes and their treatments is observed in a statistical study made.

Within the papal encyclicals (exhortations) from Leo XIII to Pope Francis from 1878 to 2013, concern with Authority, here with Obedience and Duty, is in long-term linear decline. [...] Relatedly, there is a long-term decrease of prominence for signals of Catholic uniqueness like Pope, Catholic and Doctrine, and for subject matters dealing with the political state. [...] Authority-related intra-ecclesial secularization does not necessarily imply increasing this-worldliness. Quite to the contrary, [...] prominence gains for God, Jesus and Holy Spirit and Resurrection, goes up. Such gains in other worldliness move together with the shifts of attention towards Gospel, Spirituality and Love. [...] Love wins over Terror. Within the encyclicals, the traditional eschatological code, with its keywords Sin, Death, Final Judgment, Grace, Heaven and Hell, if it is visible at all, is becoming obsolescent. This finding is in line with the erosion of anthropomorphisms that clash with a scientific naturalist world view. *Vaticanum II* clearly affected or deflected these long-term trends. The Council's aggiornamento-innovations, urging the monarchical, top-down driven Church to transform herself into an evangelizing People of God that is more engaged with the modern world, [...]. The loving Jesus and God the absolute Love move to the front. [...] Christian faith and morality, at least at the social stratum of clerical and lay religious elites, seem possible without the threats of hell [...].²³⁸

This perceived change in the attitude has given birth to a newer understanding of authority and obedience as we have treated above in the paper.

How to inform the seminarians, priests, religious men and women and the lay people of this newer understanding of authority and obedience? And how to form them in these changes? There needs a multidimensional approach to achieve this aim. First and foremost, spiritual shepherds must be of great caliber and authenticity to assume this service of authority. They need to be humble to receive the supernatural gifts that is conferred upon them by virtue of

²³⁸ M. ZÄNGLE, "Trends in Papal Communication: A Content Analysis of Encyclicals, from Leo XIII to Pope Francis": *Historical Social Research* 39, 4 (2014) 329-364. 330. Available online: <http://eds.a.ebscohost.com/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=10&sid=237ae10d-8856-4556-b954-5b5d82c867df%40sessionmgr4007&hid=4102> accessed on 07/09/2016 at 6.15 pm.

their office. These must become formator in one's respective parish and execute them understanding the cultural context. A group of lay leaders must be formed by different commissions of the dioceses. They must be given a forum to spread the message in the parish to form others in grass root level. Then, the whole process of propagation achieves the aim concretely. However, since the pre-Vatican texts appear to be very authoritative, shepherds must be informed well of the spirit behind these words. It is authoritative to make human life more authentic. These encyclicals do not demand obedience for itself, however, to the will of God discerned and discovered by the Holy see with its Collegial cooperation with all the bishops of the world.

The families and parishes, thus formed and informed, will be the bright seed beds of vocation of the future leaders of the Church in all levels. The following chapter takes the theme back to Jesuit circle, namely the documents of the General Congregations.

Chapter 4

Obedience in the Documents of General Congregations 27 - 35

The General Congregation is the highest decision making body of the Society of Jesus to which even General has to obey. It gathers to elect the General and to deliberate on matters of higher importance pertaining to the life and mission of the Society. So far in the history it has gathered 36 times. Every occurrence of it is a time of thanks giving for all the gifts received, a time of discernment of God's will, a time of obedience to it and a time of representation to the Pope for any change in the Institute. Ignatian spirituality and GCs affected mutually enriching each other.²³⁹ The recent Congregations have followed a general manner of proceeding. It collects postulates from the Congregation of Provincials and from individuals. The historical prefaces to each of them narrate the process. Invariably all of them of the GCs 31 to 35 talk about the large number of postulate on the theme of obedience, role of the superiors, governance, our mission, the fourth vow of obedience to the Pope,²⁴⁰ discernment etc. In the case of the GC 35, "Three hundred and fifty postulates had been received by the General's curia and they were classified into three groups: those which must be passed on to the General Congregation, those which came within the competence of Father General (117) and those which were rejected (31)."²⁴¹ This chapter studies the teaching and practice of obedience and representation in the documents of GCs 27-35.

²³⁹ Cf. J. MAGAÑA, "La Congregación General 33 y ejercicios": *Manresa* 56 (1985), 279-296, 295.

²⁴⁰ Cf. V. MENÉNDEZ, "Eclesialidad desde la experiencia de la Congregación General XXXIV": *Manresa* 67 (1995) 249-262.

²⁴¹ 'Historical Introduction to the Decrees of the 35th General Congregation' in J. W. PADBERG (ED), *Jesuit life*

1. In the Collected Decrees of the GC 27

In the first few GCs after the restoration, the obedience was taken as it had been dealt in the constitutions. To insist the value, role and importance of obedience in the *Collected Decrees*²⁴² of GC 27, the letter of St Ignatius on was also prescribed to Fr General in the official edition of the entire institute along with other documents that were important to with respect to the life of Society.

In the official edition of the entire Institute, which the superior general, when he judges it opportune, will have the authority to have printed, the following should be included: 1°. All the pontifical documents on the Society's behalf and from which the current law is developed... 2°. The Constitutions of our holy founder, the General Examen, the Spiritual Exercises, the Letter on Obedience, and the Rules of Modesty; [...] 5° ordinances of the generals pertaining to the entire Society and actually in force²⁴³. (CD 7)

The GC 27 has listed obedience as one of the *Substantials of the First Rank, Elements Contained in the Formula of the Institute*. (CD 13) It lists authority and obedience in hierarchical order. GC has the supreme power to which General himself is to obey. Here are the ones that are connected to the obedience and authority.

n. 3. As far as the concerns its governance in general, 1°. Supreme power, to which the general himself is subject, rests with a general congregation; it should be summoned to handle matters of greater moment. [...] 4°. The manner of governance in the Society is monarchical and rests in the decisions of the one superior. 5°. Except in those matters that are reserved to a general congregation, the superior general has full power, which, except for a few cases, he exercises, not in capitular fashion or by a deliberative vote of his consultors, but by a consultative vote only. [...] 7°. The manner of governing in the Society is paternal, showing forth the meekness, kindness, and charity of Christ. (CD 13)

The nature and governance is monarchical and all decisions are taken by one superior. The superior does not function in a capitular model or by deliberative votes except in some prescribed cases. Admission and granting of vows also by the superior. The time of final vows is not fixed. It depends on the person. "As to the particular items of governance, 1°. Admission to the Society or to first vows is granted by superiors, and not in capitular fashion or by a deliberative vote of their consultors. [...] 3°. The time of admission to final is not fixed. [...]" (CD 13)

and mission today. The decrees of the 31st - 35th General Congregations of the Society of Jesus, The Institute of Jesuit Sources, Saint Louis 2009, 712.

²⁴² Collected Decrees are decrees collected from earlier GCs given in GC 27.

²⁴³ J. W. PADBERG, M. D. O'KEEFE & J. L. MCCARTHY, *For Matters of Greater Moment*. The first thirty Jesuit General Congregations, Institute of Jesuit Sources, St Louis 1994, 529.

The Society and each member, especially solemnly professed is in special bond with the Pope, by the fourth vow to the Pope. Everyone must be ready to live in any part of the world where more fruitful service is possible.

n. 5. As far as concerns means to its end in general, [...] 2°. The Society of Jesus and each of its members, particularly the solemnly professed, engage in their spiritual combat under obedience to the Roman pontiff by means of a special bond to him. [...] 5°. All should be ready to live in any part of the world where there is hope of the greater service of God and the greater help of souls, ready to undertake any offices or ministries, and most particularly any missions. (CD 13)

All must obey the superiors in all matters as a characteristic virtue. Though the vows of the scholastics and coadjutors are perpetual, they are subject to conditions with regard to the Society.

n. 6. As for as concerns particular means to its end, 1°. The vows of scholastics and coadjutors, [...] are perpetual on the part of those who take them; but on the part of the Society their perpetuity is subject to conditions. [...] 6°. All should render obedience to superiors, in whom they are to see, as it were, Christ present, and they should be outstanding in this virtue, inasmuch as it is characteristic of the Society. (CD 13)

Some are listed as *Substantials of the Second Rank, Related to the First Group*. Important tool of spiritual governance is manifestation of conscience to the superior. It is a must. Each Jesuit must express all about oneself and about any other person that one has received outside of confession, manifestation of conscience or the revelation of a secret by someone seeking advice. This must be done with due love and charity with the aim of the Society in mind. Father general who has the supreme authority next to GC is offered provident care by means of the assistants and the admonitor who plays a role of conscience from outside.

n.7. 3°. An account of conscience must be rendered to the superior; 4°. Each one should be content that anything whatsoever that is noted in his regard should be manifested to superiors by whoever knows it outside of confession, the account of conscience, or the revelation of a secret by someone seeking advice. 5°. All should likewise be prepared to manifest one another with due love and charity. [...] 7°. The Society exercises its provident care over the general by means of the assistants and the admonitor. (CD 13)

The GC, with all its supreme power, can only add new substantials but cannot change them even that of the second order. The provincial congregations are prohibited even to treat the matter of changing them. GC 27 has cautioned that even in the matter that are not substantial should follow a slow and long process. They are experimented for period of time. Such tested changes are accepted. However, they must not be inserted into the text of Constitutions but indicated in a different manner.

n.1. A general congregation can indeed declare substantials of the first rank but cannot change them. (C1, d.16). n.2. Those matters that truly are substantials of the second rank likewise cannot be changed (cf. C2, d.6); consequently, general congregations have acted correctly and laudably in always refusing to alter matters that have been authentically declared to be substantials of this sort. n.3. In no sense is it permitted to treat of changing substantials of either order in a provincial congregation. (C4, d.26; C6, d.12; C7, d.40). n.4. Even in those matters that which are not substantials, it is not fitting that a general congregation should change the Constitutions without previous experimentation or without the clearest of reasons (C1, d.16). Moreover, let such changes not be inserted into the text of the Constitutions themselves, but be indicated in some other fashion (C3, d.23). (CD 14)

Rules and ordinances decreed by a superior general can be changed by himself or his successors, even though they have been placed in the edition of the entire Institute.²⁴⁴ (CD 15)

The organizational structure of the Society is defined as follows: “The Society is divided into provinces, vice-provinces, and missions (from many decrees). Vice-provinces and missions are either dependent upon some province or else are immediately subject to the superior general (from many decrees).²⁴⁵ (CD 19)

2. In the documents of GCs 28 - 30

The GC 28 confirmed the ideas of obedience as expounded in the Letter on obedience of the founder and in the Constitutions. “All of Ours, led by that spirit of obedience [...] should under no pretext allow themselves to withdraw from superiors, who are taking the place of Christ; rather, they should choose sincerely to be led by them in all matters.”²⁴⁶ (GC 28, d. 22, n. 2). In the response to many postulates with regard to the time limit of the validity of a command or an order given in virtue of holy obedience, the validity of the decision of any superior, the importance of role of the consultors and the provision to appeal the successors or to the higher superiors could be understood clearly and in practical terms. The commands in virtue of holy obedience given rarely on serious matters only after listening to the advice of the consultors. They are in force until they are taken back by the successors or by higher superiors. The death or the term of the superior does not remove the decision.

1. Commands in virtue of holy obedience should not be given except for a very serious reason (9/12) and only, generally speaking, after the consultors have given their advice. 2. Commands imposed in common retain their force even after the superior who gave them has died or has finished his term of office, until such time as they are revoked by his successors or by higher superiors. (C4, d.3; C7, d.72; C17, d.12.). (CD 250)²⁴⁷

²⁴⁴ J. W. PADBERG, M. D. O’KEEFE & J. L. MCCARTHY, 531-533.

²⁴⁵ J. W. PADBERG, M. D. O’KEEFE & J. L. MCCARTHY, 533.

²⁴⁶ J. W. PADBERG, M. D. O’KEEFE & J. L. MCCARTHY, 602.

²⁴⁷ J. W. PADBERG, M. D. O’KEEFE & J. L. MCCARTHY, 577.

The GC 30 encountered the vow, virtue and practice of obedience amidst very difficult challenges. So, it dedicated a separate decree (d. 40) to deal with the theme and enumerates dangers to the obedience in the world that also affects that in the Society. (cf. GC 30 d. 21) To name a few, pursuit of uncontrolled freedom in the way of thinking and acting, lack of trust and respect towards authority, lack of spiritual and supernatural approach, attitude of looking at the superiors' defects in his life and in his commands. These are so dangerous that not only affects the practice of obedience but even the very basic principle and concept of it in Christian life. (Cf. GC 30 d. 45)

Therefore, it proposes following measures within the Society to tackle the issue. All superiors, formators of all stages and writers must concentrate on the virtue to give a solid theological foundation and explain clearly the ascetic and apostolic importance of obedience.

1°. Superiors, instructors of third probation, novice masters, prefects of spiritual matters, and writers too should studiously foster among Ours that obedience which is prescribed for us in the Constitutions. Hence, from the novitiate on and throughout the entire time of formation, Ours should receive a clear and complete teaching on obedience; its theological foundations should be clearly presented, and at the same time it should be made clear that its ascetical and apostolic importance retain their full strength even in our times.²⁴⁸ (GC 30 d. 45)

Even in matters of daily living obedience must be adhered to for supernatural reasons. It also insists that any failure in obedience must not go unpunished. "In order that the habit of the virtue may be more firmly acquired, the exercise of obedience should be constantly furthered for supernatural reasons even in matters of daily living; and deficiencies should not be passed over unpunished." (GC 30 d. 45 n. 2) Formed members must set a shining example by their close dependence upon superior in their life and apostolic work. (cf. GC 30 d. 45 n. 3)

It acknowledges and demands the vital role of the superior in fostering obedience by being a symbol of divine paternity that is revealed in Christ, by their familiarity with God, honesty, fortitude, sincerity, benevolence, humility, dedication to their duties, being example, willingness to listen to their subjects, by uplifting their spirits, inspiring in them a desire to be led and be ruled by him with confidence. Thus, he makes them all one in body and one in spirit.

Superiors should remember that they ought to evince to their subjects the divine paternity, which is revealed in Christ. Let them therefore in their manner of governance practice familiarity with God, so that they may be inspired and ruled by him. Let them be honest and sincere, firm and benevolent, humble and dedicated to their duties. They should teach obedience to their subjects by example and so interact with their subjects, by giving them a willing hearing and uplifting their spirits, that they gain their confidence and truly make up with them one body and one spirit. (GC 30 d. 45 n. 4)

²⁴⁸ J. W. PADBERG, M. D. O'KEEFE & J. L. MCCARTHY, 671.

3. In the documents of the GC 31

GC31 was held in two sessions.²⁴⁹ It too received a very many postulates related to the crisis of obedience. They requested that decrees affirm the principle of Ignatian obedience, explain the biblical, psychological and sociological principles of the same. So, a special commission was set to deal with the matter. It felt that the theme of ‘Governance in general’ also can be treated under the same theme rather than dedicating a separate decree.²⁵⁰ Decree 4 on ‘The Preservation and Renewal of the Institute’ expresses the mind of The Congregation that realized the spiritual dimension of the matter. Therefore, it revoked the punishment given in No 305-306 of the collected decrees of the GC 27. The reason is that it trusts the love and longing for all perfections may lead all Jesuits to the genuine preservation and increase the body and spirit of the Society. (cf. Cons 602, 813).²⁵¹ (Cf. GC 31, 60)

The actual decree on ‘The life of obedience’ is decree 17. However, all the decree has something to add to, mention about, draw from the virtue of obedience. In Decree 8 on ‘The Spiritual Formation of Jesuits’ we find the role of obedience in the spiritual formation. “[I]t is essential that each one should dispose himself to implore that grace by humble prayer and to respond to it with docile obedience in all his [God’s] actions.” (GC 31, 76) Following are the qualities that make our following of Christ more genuine and intimate:

[...] a readiness for service founded on obedience and self-denial, the ability to find God in all things, development of skill in the discernment of spirits, ease in initiating spiritual conversation with others, a concern for thinking with the Church. (See *SpEx* 146–47, 352–70; *Cons.* [288, 547, 648, 729, 813]. (GC 31, 79) [...] spiritual formation should fashion men who have true freedom and maturity of spirit, who feel themselves to be freer, the closer they are dedicated through obedience to the will of God. (GC 31, 83)

The obedience involves a spirit of initiative and responsibility. An attitude of self-denial facilitates team work. All formees need time and opportunity to grow in freedom and maturity.

This objective is unattainable apart from the constant cultivation of a spirit of initiative and responsibility within obedience, and of self-denial in working together at a common task. This, as St. Ignatius rightly perceived, can be obtained only through experience, which makes it

²⁴⁹ J. W. PADBERG, (ED), *Jesuit life and mission today*. The decrees of the 31st - 35th General Congregations of the Society of Jesus, The Institute of Jesuit Sources, Saint Louis 2009. It is a complete authorized English-language version of the following official texts as published in Rome by the General Curia of the Society of Jesus in the *Acta Romana Societatis Iesu (AR)*: 1. *Decreta Congregationis Generalis XXXI . . . annis 1965–1966 (AR 1967)*. 2. *Decreta Congregationis Generalis XXXII . . . annis 1974–1975 (AR 1975)*. 3. *Decreta Congregationis Generalis XXXIII . . . anno 1983 (AR 1984)*. 4. *Decreta Congregationis Generalis XXXIV . . . anno 1995 (AR 1995)*. 5. *Decrees of General Congregation XXXV . . . anno 2008 (AR 2009)*.

²⁵⁰ “Historical preface to the decrees of the 31st General Congregation” in J. W. PADBERG, (ED), 21.

²⁵¹ “Historical preface to the decrees of the 31st General Congregation” in J. W. PADBERG, (ED), 32.

necessary during the time of formation to provide opportunity for all to advance in freedom and maturity. (GC 31, 84)

Right from the novitiate through spiritual direction and obedience in order to foster initiative, practice of spiritual discernment the novitiate way of life must not be rigidly determined. This will make obedience an active process not merely in the form of a passive and impersonal submission to the rigid time table.

Education towards a discerning charity by means of spiritual direction and obedience supposes that complete trust and freedom prevail between Father Master and the novices. A further necessity is that the novitiate's way of life be not so rigidly determined that the novices, lacking in all initiative, can hardly ever practice spiritual discernment, or even obedience itself, except in the form of a passive and impersonal submission. (GC 31, 102)

The discerning charity is further helped and balanced by the formation in self-denial, in order not to carried away by wrong sense of freedom and self-initiatives. They must practice in the everyday demands of the vocation. Particular mortification taken up under obedience helps them shape themselves in austerity and sobriety.

Formation in self-denial will be more authentic the more closely the novices follow in the footsteps of Christ who took the form of a servant. Self-denial will be exercised primarily, humbly and simply, in the everyday demands of our vocation. Particular mortifications should, however, be undertaken, under the guidance of obedience, as indicated by the individual's requirements, the Church's call, and the world's needs. Let the novices learn, in theory and by practice, so to shape their life by austerity and sobriety that, being "really and spiritually poor," they may be that sign "highly esteemed today" which the Church desires. (PC 13). (GC 31, 103)

The scholastics must be helped to take up studies as part of vocation and mission in and through which one can practice obedience and personal initiatives. They must put into practice all virtues they have learnt in the earlier formation, responsibly in true freedom of the children of God.

It should also be kept in mind that the time of studies, undertaken according to the spirit of our vocation, provides valuable opportunities for obedience joined to personal initiative, for affective maturity and charity, and for a life that is poor and devoted to labor. The life of a scholastic should, therefore, be so arranged that occasions are not lacking for the truly responsible exercise of these virtues, so that Jesuits may personally experience the meaning of the evangelical counsels. (see OT 9) (GC 31, 126)

Let the practice of this discipline be such that the scholastics, following Christ their Lord and Master in humble reverence and obedience, may enjoy the true freedom of the children of God in the Holy Spirit. (GC 31, 148)

In the scholasticates a true dialogue must exist among all, superiors, professors and scholastics. It must foster all to express opinions and make suggestions which could help the superior to

arrive at the final decision. There will be closer consensus and obedience that will create a filial spirit and fraternal communion.

True dialogue should exist between superiors, professors, and scholastics. It should be possible for all to express opinions and make suggestions with openness and candor. Thus in the final decision, which belongs to the superior, there will be closer consensus and obedience, and a filial spirit and fraternal communion of mind will grow continuously within the community. (GC 31, 150)

Decree 13 on 'Religious Life in General' captures some of glimpses of the reflections of the Second Vatican Council. "In order to promote the adaptation and renewal of religious life among all Jesuits, the 31st General Congregation has made these decrees in the spirit of the Second Vatican Council." (GC 31, 209) Human response to God is total obedience. "We for our part respond by the obedience of faith in which we give ourselves freely to God, "offering the full submission of intellect and will to God who reveals," (DV 5). (GC 31, 208)

3.1 The life of obedience

The decree 17 on 'The Life of Obedience' recognizes, like GCs 27 and 30, the present challenges to it and it keeps abreast according to the signs of the times. It approaches them with an attitude of power, of love and of prudence. It approaches them not only with human means such as philosophical, psychological and sociological but also in faith.

The General Congregation, solicitous to take into account the signs of the times according to the mind of the Church, (See GS 4, 11) and conscious of the social change in our day which gives rise to a new awareness of the brotherhood of men and a keener sense of liberty and personal responsibility, along with an excessively critical attitude and an overly naturalistic view of the world, has thought it necessary to express its mind on obedience, which is a hallmark of the Society and her principle of vitality. The Congregation considers this new situation "not in the spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of prudence" (2 Tim. 1.7) as a fitting occasion and challenge for the Society's renewal in the spirit and practice of obedience. It is convinced, moreover, that the way to the grace of our vocation will be opened not by natural means alone, whether philosophical, psychological, or sociological, but ultimately under the light of faith alone, "with the eyes of the mind enlightened." (Eph. 1.18). (GC 31, 268)

Our life and mission survive and renew itself only through the sincere obedience. Because Ignatius and his first companions considered as a distinctive grace conferred on the Society.

Impelled by love of Christ, we embrace obedience as a distinctive grace conferred by God on the Society through its founder, whereby we may be united the more surely and constantly with God's salvific will,⁵ (See PC 14). ... Through obedience, then, strengthened by vow, we follow "Jesus Christ still carrying His cross in the Church militant, to whom the eternal Father gave us as servants and friends, that we may follow Him with our cross"²⁵² and be made His companions in glory. ... Now through the vow of obedience our Society becomes a more fit instrument of

²⁵² *Monumenta Patris Nadal* (in MHSJ), IV, 678; see V, 296. Quoted in GC 31, 269.

Christ in His Church, unto the assistance of souls for God's greater glory. Hence, neither our religious life nor our apostolic action can survive or be renewed unless we hold firmly to sincere obedience. (GC 31, 269)

The idea of 'The Superior as Representing Christ' is reiterated, quoting the Formula of the Institute. Therefore, superiors following the example of Christ must exercise their authority in the spirit of service and of discerning love. They must be of true personal integrity that stirs in others a voluntary obedience and a desire to be guided by him.

The first Fathers of the Society held the unshaken conviction that "they had no other head than Christ Jesus, whom alone they hoped to serve,"²⁵³ and they solemnly sanctioned this fact in the Formula of the Institute, affirming that they wanted "to serve the Lord alone." (See Formula of the Institute, 1) (GC 31, 270)

After the example of Christ, whose place he holds, the superior should exercise his authority in a spirit of service, desiring not to be ministered unto, but to serve; (See Matt. 20.28) he should be the servant of all, set over a family of fellow servants, in order to serve by his governing. ... Superiors should be appointed who, as far as possible, are gifted with true personal authority, so that they can stir subjects to voluntary obedience, and so that the subjects may willingly agree to be guided by them. (GC 31, 271)

On the part of the subjects they must love and revere them interiorly. They must give full and generous obedience placing total trust in Christ. It must be offered with complete availability in a personal and responsible way

The Society's members, as the Constitutions provide, should show respect and inward reverence for their superiors, and in the Lord, should love them from the heart. (See *Cons.* [284, 551]; PC 14.) (GC 31, 276) [...] obedience full and generous, of the intellect, too, insofar as possible, rendered in a spirit of faith, humility, and modesty. (GC 31, 277) Trust is to be placed in Christ. (GC 31, 280)

In order to achieve the aim of the Institute and the Society a 'Bond of Union' is a must. This is attained by obedience. It serves as the discerning principle to choose any ministry.

The Society "can neither be preserved nor governed, and so it cannot attain the end to which it aspires for God's glory, unless its members be united to each other and with their head." (*Cons.* [655]) This will be effected mainly by "the bond of obedience, which unites individuals with their superiors, and these among themselves and with the provincials, and all with Father General." (*Cons.* [821]) (GC 31, 282). we are to select these labors according to the obligations of obedience and the nature of our ministries, avoiding every desire of monetary gain or temporal advantage. (GC 31, 301)

GC 31 defines the foundation and aim of Jesuit community life in a Trinitarian way. It has its origin in the will of the Father who unites all into one. The member labor to fulfil the holy will.

²⁵³ *Fontes narrativi de S. Ignatio* (in MHSJ), I, 204. Quoted in GC 31, 270.

Through responsible obedience the Holy Spirit guides and inspires each of them in the community. This is a community of men called by Christ.

And so, community in the Society of Jesus takes its origin from the will of the Father joining us into one, and is constituted by the active, personal, united striving of all members to fulfill the divine will, with the Holy Spirit impelling and guiding us individually through responsible obedience to a life which is apostolic in many ways. It is a community of men who are called by Christ to live with Christ, to be conformed to Christ, to fulfill the work of Christ in themselves and among men. This is the foundation and aim of community life in the Society of Jesus. (GC 31, 313)

The community life is important for religious life. It shows the whole wellbeing of the religious life. Obedience in the community is expression of the cooperation. It is more perfect with the mutual trust and service that binds superiors and the subjects. “When community life flourishes, the whole religious life is sound. Obedience, for instance, is a very clear expression of our cooperation toward common ends, and it becomes more perfect to the extent that superiors and subjects are bound to one another in trust and service.” (GC 31, 315)

In the formation houses the scholastics must be educated for dialogue among themselves and with superiors to foster cooperation and obedience. Everyone is formed to be capable of making best possible choices with divine illumination and ample advices from fellow Jesuits.

At the same time, attention must be paid to education for dialogue among themselves and with superiors, for cooperation and obedience, [...] all of which tend to form men who are capable of making the best possible choices, with the help of supernatural illumination and sufficient advice from others. (GC 31, 341)

4. Representation to the Pope from the GC 32

The implementation of Vatican council II in the Church throughout the world made itself felt in different ways. The Decrees on the revision of *The Formula of a General Congregation* (FCG), *Formula of a Province Congregation* (FPC) and of *Procurators Congregation* of the GC 31 made its impact felt in the GC 32 in the nature of the members who attended and in the postulates received. It received many postulates on the theme of the Fourth vow to all, including the non-ordained Jesuits.²⁵⁴ However, Pope Paul VI had communicated his mind on the theme through a letter from the Secretary of the State that “the extension to all, even non-priests, of the fourth vow with regard to missions seemed to present serious difficulties which would impede the approval necessary on the part of the Holy See.”²⁵⁵ However, GC decided by a

²⁵⁴ J. ITURRIOZ, “Coadjutores “Seglares” (Congregación General 32, 2, 22)”: *Manresa* 51 (1979) 23-40. Reflects on this theme.

²⁵⁵ “A historical preface to the decrees of the 32nd General Congregation” in J. W. PADBERG, (ED), 267.

majority vote to deliberate on the theme and to make an Ignatian representation to the Pope on the same.

In these circumstances, the Congregation by vote (228 positive and 8 negative) decided that the question of grades should be treated, thinking that there was still place for a “representation.” It wanted to start a discernment in depth on the whole matter, both in order to determine the mind of the Congregation and in order, if it so turned out, to be able to present its reasons in a spirit of obedience and filial reverence to the Supreme Pontiff for his consideration.²⁵⁶

The question was broadly discussed [...] Towards the end of these deliberations, on January 22, 1975, from an indicative or straw vote of the members it became clear that the Congregation really was tending to “represent” to the Supreme Pontiff, in the Ignatian sense of “representation,” the opinion which favored the suppression of grades so that all Jesuits would pronounce the same four vows “in the conviction that thus the priestly character of the Society can and must be preserved.”²⁵⁷

The Pope was not happy with the proceedings. He demanded an explanation for the conduct of the Congregation that went beyond his disapproval. The report was sent and then he confirmed again that in no way he could grant a change in this matter.

The Holy Father informed the Congregation that this had been done contrary to his will; he asked that the Congregation take no further action on this matter, and that it send to him a report of the reasons which had led the members of the Congregation to choose that line which had found expression in the indicative or straw vote. After he received that report, he confirmed in an autograph letter that as supreme guarantor of the essentials of the Society which were contained in the Formula of the Institute he could in no way grant a change in this matter.²⁵⁸

It was indeed Ignatian representation. The Congregation accepted the decision of the Pope in docile obedience. “The Congregation soon concluded the whole affair, [...] the General Congregation, in the name of the whole Society, accepted the decision of His Holiness obediently and faithfully.”²⁵⁹

4.1 Union in the Society

The GC 32 also received a rather large number of postulates on obedience separately and on other themes like spiritual life, prayer, community life in the Society, spiritual discernment in common and the proper role of superiors in it all of which involve the theme of obedience interconnectedly.²⁶⁰ It became aware of the current circumstances that affect the union in the Society, more than those are explained in the Constitutions. They made non-Jesuits wonder

²⁵⁶ “A historical preface to the decrees of the 32nd General Congregation” in J. W. PADBERG, (ED), 272.

²⁵⁷ Ibid. 272.

²⁵⁸ Ibid. 273.

²⁵⁹ Ibid. 273.

²⁶⁰ Cf. Ibid. 274.

with a genuine concern that the Society had lost its missionary spirit and thrust and that Jesuits had lost loyalty.

These two exaggerations, each tending in an opposite direction, have threatened unity within the Society and have given non-Jesuits cause for concern and wonder. Some among them fear that the Society may have lost the forcefulness and precision with which it once exercised its priestly and apostolic mission of service to the faith. Others, when they read publications in which Jesuits unsympathetically criticize one another, their own Father General, the magisterium of the Church, and even the Holy Father, ask whether Jesuits have lost their traditional loyalty, obedience, and devotion to the Society and the Church. (GC 32, 4)

Addressing on the Fourth vow, GC 32 reiterates the idea of obedience being ‘Distinguishing Mark of the Society’. Our community and our religious vows are not merely done out of personal devotion. They are apostolic. They set us free for mission. The vow of obedience frees us to respond to the call of Christ as expressed through our superiors.

30/ 20. Not only our community life, but our religious vows are apostolic. [...] In binding us, the vows set us free: [...] by our vow of obedience, to respond to the call of Christ as made known to us by him whom the Spirit has placed over the Church, and to follow the lead of our superiors, especially our Father General, who has all authority over us *ad aedificationem*. (GC 32, 30)

The vow of obedience to the Pope takes shape according to the signs of the time. For example, the GC 31 defined it as fighting against atheism. It is the role of the superior to enable the members of the community to understand and appreciate such unique and unusual mission taken under obedience and also to take joint responsibility in them, even to suffer persecution for justice’s sake, if need be.

Pope Paul VI confirmed²⁶¹ “as a modern expression of your vow of obedience to the Pope” that we offer resistance to the many forms of contemporary atheism. This was the mission he entrusted to us at the time of the 31st General Congregation, ... The superior will enable the members of the community not only to understand and appreciate the particular— and possibly unusual—apostolates undertaken by their companions under obedience, but also to take joint responsibility for them. And if contradictions arise as a result of a particular course of action, the community will be better prepared to “suffer persecution for justice’s sake” if the decision to take that course has been prepared for by a discernment in which it had taken part or was at least represented by its superior. (see Matt. 5.10) (GC 32, 68)

In the third section on ‘Witness to the Gospel in Today’s Circumstances’ the eleventh decree is ‘The Union of Minds and Hearts in the Society of Jesus’. It begins from the union with God in Christ, “from which flows our brotherly communion with one another, a communion strengthened and made apostolically efficacious by the bond of obedience.” (GC 32, 203) “We begin with the Ignatian insight that the unity of an apostolic body such as ours must be based

²⁶¹ PAUL VI, “Address to the Members of the 32nd General Congregation,” December 3, 1974, pp. 519–536. Quoted in GC 32, 68.

on the union of each and all with God in Christ. For if we have come together as a companionship, it is because we have, each of us, responded to the call of the Eternal King. (*SpEx 98*)” (GC 32, 204). In this obedience (and authority) plays a vital role, being the ‘The Bond of Union’. Though it is presented so in the Constitutions, today it is all the more relevant in the context of diversity of apostolic undertakings which demands well defined distinctions between institutes and communities.

“This union is produced, in great part, by the bond of obedience.” (*Cons.* [659; see 662, 664, 666]) [...] it is the guarantee of our apostolic efficacy. Today, especially, given the wide dispersion of our apostolic enterprises, the need for us to acquire highly specialized skills in highly specialized works, and the consequent need, in many places, to make a distinction between our apostolic institutes and our religious communities, the preservation of unity of purpose and direction becomes a prime necessity. (GC 32, 226)

Keeping all the members in unity in obedience is the role of the major superior as described in the GC 31. And GC 32 highlights the equal importance of the local superior. There is a need to insist on this subsidiarity in the present era of faster and quicker communication. He needs to define the mission precisely so that all have recourse to him in every respect. His mode of governing must be spiritual and in modesty and charity as exemplified by the Founder.

In this task of unification, the role of the major superior has been well defined by the 31st General Congregation.²⁶² What this 32nd General Congregation would like to stress is the equally important role of the local or community superior. ... Moreover, the task of the superior is not only to support the mission of the members of his community, but at times to determine it more precisely, “in such wise that the individuals dwelling in some house or college have recourse to their local superior or rector and are governed by him in every respect.” *Cons.* [662] (GC 32, 227). [H]is task is to keep it together in love and obedience by that spiritual mode of governance “in all modesty and charity in the Lord” recommended and exemplified by St. Ignatius. *Cons.* [667]. (GC 32, 228)

The insistence of the spiritual mode of governance is not merely ritualistic and to sound traditional. It is the antidote to all menaces that blind the sense of mission. To achieve this, we have the special instrument of the manifestation of conscience.

Today, more than ever before, that spiritual mode of governance is needed. The contemporary stress on individual initiative mentioned earlier, combined with the wide range of opportunities open to that initiative, tends to obscure the sense of mission essential to Ignatian obedience and may dislodge it altogether, unless we make fuller use of the special instrument for spiritual governance bequeathed to us by St. Ignatius: the account of conscience. (GC 32, 230)

Obedience by vow in day to day life or in extraordinary matters is always an act of faith that fulfills the will of God. In that one need not understand why one is sent. However, dialogue in manifestation of conscience helps the superior and the subject concerned to understand each

²⁶² GC 31, D. 46; *ActRSJ*, XIV, 978 sq. Cf. GC 31, D. 22; *ActRSJ*, XIV, 931. Quoted in GC 32, 227.

other and the mission better. The one who is sent can concretely plan and prepare himself for the mission.

[B]oth the superior who sends and the companion who is sent gain assurance that the mission is really God's will if it is preceded by the dialogue that is the account of conscience. For by it the superior acquires an inner knowledge of those subject to his authority: what they can and what they cannot do, and what help they need by way of counsel or resource to do what they can. The companion, in turn, learns what the mission on which he is being sent involves and what, concretely, he must do to discharge his responsibility. (GC 32, 231)

For a better fruit of this practice of the account of conscience it has to be genuine. It helps both involved to make an authentic discernment to know God's will. It fosters union of minds and heart from where our apostolic endeavours get their dynamism. If the community lacks sincerity and openness in mutual relationships it becomes a stagnant structure that no more responds to the needs and aspirations of the people of today. It finally dies.

The more the account of conscience is genuinely practiced, the more authentic will our discernment be of God's purpose in our regard and the more perfect that union of minds and hearts from which our apostolate derives its dynamism. A community from which sincerity and openness in mutual relationships are absent soon becomes immobilized in purely formal structures which no longer respond to the needs and aspirations of the men of our time, or else it disintegrates altogether. (GC 32, 232)

The theme of obedience could include the duty of feeling and thinking with the Church. Union of hearts and minds in Jesuit life depends on being so with the Church. "Beyond the limits of the strict matter of our vow of obedience extends our duty of thinking with the Church. Our being united among ourselves depends, in the last analysis, on our being united in both mind and heart to the Church that Christ founded." (GC 32, 233)

5. In the documents of GC 33

A few years before the GC 33 was a time of uncertainty and very trying for the Society of Jesus. In 1980, contrary to the provisions of the Constitutions, "the Supreme Pontiff in a letter dated October 5²⁶³ named Father Paolo Dezza (Italy) as his Delegate in charge of seeing to the preparation of the Society for the general congregation and the temporary government of the Society. He also named Father Giuseppe Pittau (Japan) to be the Delegate's Coadjutor."²⁶⁴ The whole Society demonstrated a total obedience in absolute faith and docility to the decision of the Pope.

²⁶³ AR XVIII, 401 (Letter of July 3, 1980). Quoted in "A historical preface to the decrees of the 33rd General Congregation", J. W. PADBERG, (ED), 413.

²⁶⁴ "A historical preface to the decrees of the 33rd General Congregation", J. W. PADBERG, (ED), 413.

Through a self-examen of the Society GC 33 feels grateful to God for those “Jesuits in our day are bearing witness to this fidelity toward the Church and the Roman Pontiff; in all parts of the world they are fulfilling with constancy the missions entrusted to them, and some indeed are suffering persecution, even in prisons or internment camps.” (GC 33, 8). At the same time, it is aware of the not so faithful cases that cause serious concern in the pastoral ministry. Some of these tensions and difficulties are so much part and parcel of our apostolates. So, it urges all to grow in obedience that is rooted in truth and love. It asks the General to foster studies to formulate rules to feel with the Church in the light of the teachings of the second Vatican council to our present time.

Accordingly, we seriously urge all members of the Society, for the good of the whole Church, to consider how we may grow in that obedience which is profoundly rooted in both truth and love.²⁶⁵ Looking to our future life and apostolate, we wish to encourage all to foster a truly Ignatian readiness for active collaboration with the Supreme Pontiff and all who share pastoral office with him. The General Congregation is conscious of the difficulties and tensions which often accompany the apostolate in today’s world. Accordingly, to find solutions in so serious a matter, it asks Father General to promote further studies enabling him to help and guide Jesuits in teaching doctrine and in their pastoral activity. He should also provide that, in a way suited to our times, the “Rules for Thinking with the Church” (*SpEx*, 352–370) be applied in the light of the Second Vatican Council. (GC 33, 8)

Today to hear and respond to the call of God we need an attitude of discernment. Our Jesuit discernment involves the examen, prayer, fraternal dialogue in the community and the openness to superiors that facilitates obedience. (cf. GC 33, 13). And our interior liberty will show itself in availability in obedience to respond to the complex needs, in a commitment to the world without losing the relationship with God, oneself and others and in a self-transcendence.

– a greater availability on the part of the whole Society as well as the individual Jesuit which will enable us to respond, in obedience, to the cultural differences and changes in our modern world; – a rhythm of life which allows us to maintain our commitment to the world and still gives us space for solitude and silence, as well as for necessary relaxation and joyous celebration within our communities; – a self-transcendence rejecting that individualism which inhibits integration into community life, necessary both for the expression and support of our faith. (GC 33, 15)

6. In the documents of GC 34

The 34th General Congregation took up the following themes for deliberations: United with Christ on Mission, other important areas of Jesuit life - spiritual life, formation, obedience, community life, the local superior. These have been treated by recently presided general

²⁶⁵ FR. ARRUPPE, *The Local Superior: His Apostolic Mission*, 18-21. AR XVIII, 565–567. Quoted in GC 33, 8.

congregations. It took up an important revision of the Constitutions and incorporated into the Complementary Norms (NC). They are recommended to the ordinary government of the Society.

The decree 6 on ‘Ministerial Priesthood and Jesuit Identity’ restates our tradition to resist in total obedience in the matters of naming of Ours to the episcopacy. It urges Father General to continue the tradition of dialoguing with the Holy See, and if need be to come out with clear norms with regard to this.

GC 34 while in full accord with the Society’s charism and its desire to be available for mission, nevertheless firmly restates the Society’s tradition to resist, insofar as is compatible with obedience, nominations to the episcopacy. For St. Ignatius, this principle was vital for the mission and well-being of “this least Society” and was not contradictory to his desire to be available for mission. Jesuits were to serve the Church and the Supreme Pontiff, but not as bishops. *Const.* [817f.] To clarify this issue, the general congregation urges Father General to continue in dialogue with the Holy See on this matter and, if it would be useful, to issue as a result further clear norms to be followed by any Jesuit informed that he is being considered as a candidate for the episcopacy. (GC 34, 193)

The GC 34 highlights the inter connectedness of the vow of obedience and chastity. To remain celibate is constitutive of one’s obedience for only it can make a complete obedience for mission possible. It does not mean that the apostolic availability cripples one’s affectivity, but it means that one’s chastity is embodiment of contemplative love for all humans which makes one to be open and be able to see God everywhere.

It is constitutive of his obedience, and it is his remaining celibate for the Kingdom of God that makes such obedience for mission possible. If this apostolic availability is not to cripple his affectivity, it is only because his chastity embodies a contemplative love that includes all human beings and makes the Jesuit open and able to find God everywhere. (GC 34, 238)

The decree 11 ‘On Having a Proper Attitude of Service in the Church’ registers the reaffirmation of our tradition as previous congregations and Fr General. It throws light on the constructive efforts amidst misunderstandings against all destructive forces within and outside the Church as a part and parcel of our vocation not only as religious but also in a more special way by the virtue of the Fourth vow to the Pope.

When General Congregation 33 spoke of our “Life in the Church,” (GC 33, D 1, nn. 6–8) it committed the Society once again to “serving the Church in her teaching, life, and worship.” (Ibid, n. 6). In his final address to the congregation of procurators,²⁶⁶ Fr. General Peter-Hans Kolvenbach reiterated this commitment. GC 34 reaffirms this long and permanent tradition of service proper to the Society, one to which we dedicate ourselves not only as religious but also,

²⁶⁶ PETER-HANS KOLVENBACH, *Final Address to the Congregation of Procurators*, 8 September 1987, nn. 8f., *AR* 19 (1987): pp. 1081–84. Quoted in GC 34, 298.

and especially, in virtue of the fourth vow of obedience to the pope in regard to missions. (GC 34, 291)

A Jesuit scholar or a theologian sees challenges as opportunities for service. There is mutual trust in this service between the Church and the Society in the person of the one involved in it. This trust makes the Church remain an active force for good in the realm that molds public opinion.

A Jesuit, especially the scholar or theologian engaged in research and the molding of informed public opinion, will see these challenges as occasions for service. ... Only through the exacting labor of the scholarly enterprise, carried out with faith and in an atmosphere of freedom and mutual trust, can the Church remain an active force for good in the contemporary world of intellectual and cultural discourse. (GC 34, 309)

This scholarly service demands courage and integrity. It may be painful sometime. By very nature of apostolic involvement and responsibility they are dragged into very conflictual, even explosive ecclesiastical nexus. The response or even avoiding to respond will aggravate the tensions with some authorities of the Church. However, sometimes one has to do in a way that is unaccepted generally.

Such service requires courage and integrity; it can also involve pain. As Father General said, aware of “strong tensions within the Church from which the Society may not stand aloof, and through their very apostolic responsibility, Jesuits are inevitably dragged into conflictual, even explosive ecclesiastical situations.”²⁶⁷ Our response to such situations can give rise to tensions with some Church authorities. Despite—indeed, because of—our sincere desire to live in fidelity to the Magisterium and the hierarchy, there may be times when we feel justified, even obliged, to speak out in a way that may not always win us general approval and could even lead to sanctions painful to the Society and constituting an impediment to our work. (GC 34, 310)

It qualifies the action which is popularly criticized and stands condemned as something done ‘because of our sincere desire to live in fidelity to the Magisterium’. The very demand of obedience makes one look disobeying and disloyal superficially. Only time can prove the loyalty, fidelity and docile obedience behind the action. It is in resonance with the tradition of Catholic theology that ‘our first fidelity must be to God, to the truth and to a well-formed conscience’. Moreover, Ignatian obedience integrally involves prayerful discernment. In which one may find, according to the context, oneself differing from the view of the superiors of the Church or the Society who live in another context. This discernment must be represented respectfully to the superiors.

To do so does not put the Jesuit in a stance of disobedience or revolt. Ignatian obedience, in accord with the tradition of Catholic theology, has always recognized that our first fidelity must be to God, to the truth, and to a well-formed conscience. Obedience, then, cannot exclude our prayerful discernment of the course of action to be followed, one that may in some

²⁶⁷ PETER-HANS KOLVENBACH, *op. cit.*, n. 4, AR 19 (1987): p. 1079. Quoted in GC 34, 310.

circumstances differ from the one suggested by our religious and Church superiors. Such discernment, and its respectful representation to superiors, is an authentic element of our Ignatian tradition confirmed in GC 31 (GC 31, D 17, n. 10.) and clarified in GC 32. (GC 32, D 11, n. 55). (GC 34, 311)

The Church to whom the Society is called to be faithfully obedient is the real, visible, hierarchical Church, not something abstract ideal. We are integral part of it with the people of God with our virtues and defects, historical experiences of triumphs and tragedies. The discerned representation is made and with an attitude that is prescribed in the Spiritual Exercises on the rules to have proper attitude in the Church.

At the same time, Ignatian obedience is one of concrete fidelity to the real, visible, hierarchical Church, not to some abstract ideal. This Church is not something distinct from us: it is the community of believers to which we belong and whose virtues and defects, triumphs and tragedies, we share. Once the discernment is accomplished and the representations made, the Jesuit attitude will ultimately be one modeled on the “Rules in Order to Have the Proper Attitude of Mind in the Church Militant” of St. Ignatius. *SpEx* [352–70]. (GC 34, 312)

The GC is well aware that Ignatius’ context is different from ours. Ignatian service is not a historical lesson but a dynamically and organically transforming. It is a deep mystical bond which goes beyond the historical particularities of the 16th Century which moves us to seek the greater glory today in the present context.

In saying this, we are well aware that the context in which Ignatius wrote these rules is very different from that of today. But Ignatian service in the Church is not a history lesson. It is a profound mystical bond that transcends the particularities of its historical origins in the sixteenth-century Church. Rooted in faith that the Holy Spirit is guiding the Church, it drives us to seek the *magis*, serenely confident that “to them that love God, all things work together unto good” (Rom. 8:28). (GC 34, 313)

Having lived a long history of service in the Church, GC is aware and advocates that there is a time to speak and a time for silence imposed or chosen, time for representation or for abnegation of our intellect and will. This moment of silence is a new way of seeing through the suffering and uncertainty the higher truth and wisdom of the Cross.

Therefore, if there is a time for speaking out, there may also be a time for silence, chosen by discernment or even imposed by obedience. If there is a time for representation, there is also a time for the abnegation of our intellect and will, which becomes for us a new way of seeing through the clouds of suffering and uncertainty to a higher truth and wisdom, that of the Cross. (GC 34, 314)

In the decree 21 on ‘Interprovincial and Supraprovincial Cooperation’ it sees the universal character of the mission of the Society which has its origin in the Trinitarian vision of St Ignatius as the realization and complete meaningful expression of the fourth vow of obedience to the Holy Father.

The international character of our mission finds its genesis in the Trinitarian vision of Ignatius; its meaningful expression is found in our fourth vow of obedience to the Holy Father. Ignatius and his companions decided to form a single apostolic body to be placed at the disposal of the Vicar of Christ for universal mission. For Ignatius, the more universal was the service, the more was it divine. (GC 34, 433)

The decree 26 on the ‘Characteristics of Our Way of Proceeding’ highlights the role of discernment as defined in GC 32, spiral action of experience, decision and action, which is done personally and in community and lived in obedience. Thus, every Jesuit takes responsibility for each apostolic decision in the world. This Ignatian method of discernment is shared with and lived in larger community to whom and with whom we carry out our mission.

It is the Ignatian method of prayerful discernment, which can be described as “a constant interplay between experience, reflection, decision, and action, in line with the Jesuit ideal of being ‘contemplative in action.’” GC 32, D 4, n. 73. Through individual and communal apostolic discernment, lived in obedience, Jesuits take responsibility for their apostolic choices in today’s world. Such discernment reaches out, at the same time, to embrace the larger community of all those with whom we labor in mission. (GC 34, 542)

6. 1 Revision of the law

The GC 34 took up to revise the Constitution in the light of the new Code of Canon Law of 1983 (CIC) and to come out with additions to the Complementary Norms (NC) that fit our historical context with its challenges and opportunities. Father General gave introductory discourses on different themes.²⁶⁸ That on ‘our law and our life’ is apt to reflect upon with respect to the theme of obedience. The repetition of many themes like obedience in the Constitutions by St Ignatius shows that his awareness of the difference of each stage of the life of a Jesuit. Stating this fact Father General raises a valuable question on our attitude of disrespect for the differences in the name of equality.

Ignatius, however, does not repeat himself for the joy of repetition; he was very aware of the distinctiveness of each stage on this long journey. The obedience of a novice cannot be that of a formed Jesuit. The sense of belonging to an apostolic body cannot be the same for one who is sent alone on a mission and for one who fulfills this mission in the framework of a community. We can expect maturation, growth from life in the Spirit. In the Constitutions Ignatius wishes each to be able to advance towards God according to the particular demands of each stage, of each mission entrusted to him. In our, sometimes, exaggerated concern for equality for all, have we not neglected or ignored differences in experiences and individuals instead of appreciating their importance and letting this mature?²⁶⁹

There is a tendency in the Society to demand equality for all negating and ignoring the differences in experience of individual which could be known and valued in and through the spiritual governance by manifestation of conscience, dialogue at the personal and community

²⁶⁸ PETER-HANS KOLVENBACH, ‘Introductory Discourses of Father General’, J. W. PADBERG, (ED), 673-690.

²⁶⁹ PETER-HANS KOLVENBACH, ‘Introductory Discourses of Father General’, J. W. PADBERG, (ED), 688.

level. Perhaps, this present temptation of seeing or interpreting everything, sometimes hyper critically, in terms of ‘master and slave’ of our time was not existing in the time of St Ignatius or he was not aware of. Therefore, he had confidence in his companions who are spiritual and sufficiently advanced that they would grow in everything that concerns the life in the Spirit with the help of the Constitutions.

[H]e was not afraid to have confidence in those “who will be men who are spiritual and sufficiently advanced to run in the path of Christ our Lord to the extent that their bodily strength and exterior occupations allow” in everything that concerns the life in the Spirit [582]²⁷⁰, with the assurance that those who are not yet sufficiently advanced will be able to discover in the Constitutions advice and instruction for making progress on the way.²⁷¹

Ignatius wants all his companions as those who wish to find in the Constitutions a help for progress and thus for producing greater service. This desire prevents him from giving any order or much less under pain of sin, however, it moves him to be satisfied just by making challenges along with their motivation as follows.

What it is good to do [280], what it is essential to do [284], what could be helpful [282]. Nothing is imposed from without, and even less under pain of sin [602]; everything is founded on the desire, or at least the desire for the desire [102], of going forward freely and generously on the way which Ignatius proposes. Should anyone wish not to go forward on this way, he is completely free to go away. For life in the Society is just one way among many others. It is this liberty that transforms itself into a gift of life for service to the missions that are entrusted; it draws from this interior law of charity and love what the Holy Spirit writes and imprints on hearts. For it is this law which should help and inspire more than any external constitution [134].²⁷²

Ignatius was not an idealist but a realist who could acknowledge that there would always be in the Society some who could not fully live according to these views of liberty and responsibility. Therefore, “he limits himself to remarking that there should not be too many who are Jesuits in name only and remain such because of the advantages of belonging [657]. For too large a number would paralyze the proper functioning of the Society.”²⁷³

6.2 The Pope’s response to the representation of the GC 34

At the conclusion of the GC 34, all the points that needed approval of the Pope were represented to him. It included participation of formed coadjutors in GC. On behalf of the Holy See, the Secretariat of State wrote on 10 June 1995 replying, ‘On Points Which Touch Pontifical Law’.²⁷⁴ In that he informed of the approval to three matters represented. The letter insisted

²⁷⁰ Numbers within square brackets [...] in this page refers to that of the Constitutions as quoted in the original.

²⁷¹ PETER-HANS KOLVENBACH, ‘Introductory Discourses of Father General’, in J. W. PADBERG, (ED), 688.

²⁷² Ibid. 688.

²⁷³ Ibid. 688-689.

²⁷⁴ ‘Replies of the Holy Father’ in J. W. PADBERG, (ED), 696.

that such approved changes must not be interpreted as something that weakens the structure of grades or its need. For it would contradict the founder's vision that priesthood and the vow of obedience of the professed to the Supreme Pontiff are two essential elements.

In your letter of 6 May, you presented for the approval of the Holy Father the modifications, decided upon by General Congregation 34, of some points which touch on the pontifical law for the Constitutions of the Society. I wish to inform you that His Holiness, on 8 June 1995, has approved the following proposed modifications: 1. The simple vow not to seek positions of honor is restricted to the episcopate and to the positions of Vicar General and of Episcopal Vicar. 2. To the superior general is granted the faculty of suppressing any house whatsoever of the Society that he deems appropriate, after hearing his council.

3. To formed coadjutors is granted the right to participate with active, but not passive, voice in general congregations (including those in which the superior general is elected) by means of an appropriate representation which is not to surpass in its totality, counting both spiritual coadjutors and temporal coadjutors, 10 percent of the members of the general congregation.

The Holy Father wishes to stress that such changes ought not in any way be interpreted as a weakening of the structure of grades and of the need for them; this would contradict what St. Ignatius wanted for his Society, which is based on two essential elements: the priesthood and the vow of obedience of the professed to the Supreme Pontiff.

7. In the documents of GC 35

The GC 35 recalls the words of St Ignatius that it is in its obedience, above all, that the Society of Jesus should be distinct from other religious families. And recommends all need only to recall the letter²⁷⁵ of Saint Ignatius to excel in this virtue. (GC 35, 34). It acknowledges that the previous four Congregations have dealt the matter well and confirms their directives and norms.²⁷⁶ It is in response to the request of Pope Benedict XVI that it reflect on the fourth vow.²⁷⁷

The GC 35 briefly mentions the gradual unfolding of the theme of obedience in the Constitutions. Almost every part of it deals with obedience. The third part introduces the novice to obedience. The sixth and seventh parts are addressed to formed members presenting and insisting the fundamental virtues of *magis* and discerned love. The sixth part describes how the deep and personal love for Christ must blossom into obedience to the pope and superiors in the Society. The seventh part shows that the foundation principle of obedience is *magis* and emphasizes discernment, freedom and creativity in seeking the will of God. Thus, being

²⁷⁵ *Letter to the Jesuits of Portugal* (26 March 1553), § 2 (MHSI 29:671). Quoted in GC 35, 34.

²⁷⁶ See. *Complementary Norms* [NC] 149–156, 252–262; GC 31, D. 17; GC 32, D. 11; GC 34, D. 11. Quoted in GC 35, 88.

²⁷⁷ Cf. PETER-HANS KOLVENBACH, *The Holy Father's response* (21 February 2007), Letter to all Major Superiors and Electors of GC 35, p. 803. Quoted in GC 35, 88.

truthfully obedient is the only way a Jesuit puts into practice the Gospel values and of the Spiritual Exercises.

The Third Part of the Constitutions introduces the novice to spiritual and apostolic discernment. [...] The Sixth and Seventh Parts of the Constitutions address formed Jesuits and propose the fundamental virtues of apostolic life in the Society: *discreta caritas* and the *magis*. (*Cons.* 582). The Sixth Part insists that passionate love for Christ must become incarnate in obedience to the pope and superiors in the Society whose commands the formed Jesuit should obey as if they come from Christ because it is for love of Christ that he obeys. (*Cons.* 547, 551) The whole Seventh Part is a demonstration of the foundational principle of obedience, the *magis*. Here the emphasis is on discernment, freedom, and creativity in seeking the will of God and engaging in apostolic activity.²⁷⁸ Thus, fidelity to obedience becomes the way the Jesuit incarnates the values of the Gospel and of the Spiritual Exercises: availability for being at the service of the Kingdom of God and freedom to be a “man for others.” (GC 35, 94-95)

7.1 Theology of obedience

In dealing with the ‘Theological Aspects of Obedience’ it gives a very comprehensive Trinitarian root and a positive anthropological expression of it in daily life. First and foremost, Jesuit obedience seeks to fulfill the will of God the Father, with a personal love for Jesus Christ who has chosen us as his companions. The Holy Spirit fills us with this love and inspires us to be like Christ in mind and heart.

Before all else, our obedience seeks to fulfill the will of God. Its foundation is personal love for Jesus Christ who has deigned to choose us as his companions. The Holy Spirit, who has freely poured this love into our hearts, inspires in us a desire to identify ourselves with Christ and gives us the strength to “let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus.” (Phil. 2.5) (GC 35, 96) Jesus does not act of himself but only does “what he sees the Father doing.” (John 5:19) (GC 35, 97)

Jesus has left us a legacy of being source of salvation by fulfilling God’s will through his death on the cross. He won over his resistance and human weakness.

Jesus’ fidelity to his mission brought him into conflict with human sinfulness and injustice, and it led him to “death, death on a cross.” (Phil. 2:8) Conquering even his resistance and weakness, “Abba, let not my will but your will be done,” (Mark 14: 36.25 97) Jesus became the source of salvation for all by fulfilling the Father’s will. (GC 35, 98)

Incarnation of Jesus is a call to see God in all things. This gives us an insight into our way of discernment that takes into consideration historical, social and personal circumstances of our time. God is there amidst all these fully active and calling us to collaborate in his salvation project.

²⁷⁸ Ignatius’s instruction to the Jesuit sent to be patriarch of Ethiopia breathes the atmosphere of the Seventh Part. “All this is proposed under the heading of advice. The patriarch should not consider himself obliged to comply with it. Rather, he should be guided by *discreta caritas*, taking into account the circumstances of the moment and the unction of the Holy Spirit which should be his principal guide in everything” (MHSI 36, 689–690).

The incarnation of the Son of God in human history invites us to see God in all things and leads us to understand that he can make use of all things in carrying out his saving work. This is why our discernment must take into account our historical, social, and personal circumstances; it is in the midst of them that God calls us to fulfill his will. (GC 35, 101)

Jesus' resurrection and his presence in the Church make us recognize the role of the Church as mediator of the Word of God and the sacrament. Therefore, we profess obedience in the Church which becomes immediate 'pathway to God'.

By his resurrection, the Lord continues to be present in the Church through the Spirit, and through the Church he continues to make his voice heard. "Whoever hears you hears me and whoever rejects you rejects me." (Luke 10:16) The Church is the mediation of the Word of God and the sacrament of our salvation in spite of the imperfections of her children. It is through the Church that the Christian finds God, and we profess obedience in the Church in order to serve God. Within the Church, the Society is a privileged place where the will of God is manifested to us; it becomes our "pathway to God."²⁷⁹ (GC 35, 103)

Our life of vow of obedience is a pure expression of inner freedom and self-realization. It can be so only if the deep inter personal mystical experience of passionate love for and love of Christ remains alive in us. The unconditional commitment to be his companions must be renewed every day and every moment.

We will only be able to live our vow of obedience as freedom and true self-realization if the mystical experience of passionate love for Christ, the one who is sent by the Father and who is obedient to the Father's will, remains alive in us, and if we daily renew our unconditional commitment to be his companions. (GC 35, 104)

Having presented the theological principle of obedience GC 35 scans 'Our Contemporary Context and Its Challenges'. It finds ample opportunities and ambience such as respect for human persons and their rights, willingness and openness to dialogue and alternatives, freedom of expression, longing to build community and to be greater than oneself. However, it is also affected by an exaggerated self-sufficiency and individualism. They are stumbling blocks to the practice of authentic religious obedience.

Many positive values prized by our contemporaries are essential to living religious obedience according to our Jesuit way of proceeding: respect for the human person and for human rights, willingness to engage in dialogue marked by freedom of expression, openness to creative alternatives, the desire to build community, and the longing to live for something greater than oneself. But our culture is also marked by a tendency to exaggerated self-sufficiency and individualism that create difficulties for the practice of religious obedience. (GC 35, 105)

A perfect example and expression of the exaggerated self-sufficiency and individualism could be seen in one's desire to commit oneself to the Lord in personal trust. At the same time, when it comes to the question of commitment to the Church, to the Society and to its way of

²⁷⁹ Formula of the Institute, *Exposcit Debitum* (1550), §3 (MHSI 63, 376). Quoted in GC 35, 103.

proceeding it is weak or almost nil. “At times, however, our desire to commit ourselves to the Lord in personal trust is not matched by our desire to commit ourselves to the Church or to the body of the Society and its way of proceeding.” (GC 35, 106)

It also expresses as lack of availability to our superiors, lack of prudence in voicing one’s ideas and opinions, lack of cooperation with the local Church, lack of love for the Church and the Society. Some are led to self-deception due to lack of proper understanding of discernment that it is communal exercise that reaches its goal only when it is conferred as a mission by a superior.

An exaggerated desire for autonomy has led some to various expressions of self-sufficiency and lack of commitment: lack of availability to our superiors, lack of prudence in the expression of our opinions, lack of a spirit of cooperation in our approach to the local Church, and even disaffection from the Church and the Society. Some have used the language of discernment to excuse a desire to determine their own mission, forgetting that discernment in the Society is a communal exercise that takes into account a multiplicity of voices but reaches its completion only in the conferral of a mission by the superior. (GC 35, 107)

The contemporary world has affected not only the subjects in the manner of obedience but also superiors in their manner of discharging their mission of leadership and authority. Some are motivated by productivity and immediate results who often compare the slow performance of religious, be it in formation or in any other mission, with the quick and instant results of the competitive world outside. As a result, they lack attention to the human person, lack time to listen to their subjects. This attitude of a superior is a big danger to the spiritual nature of governance.

The patterns of our contemporary world have their effect on the exercise of authority as well. The way in which our world prizes productivity can lead to overwork, and this can lead to distraction and lack of attention to the human person. The exercise of authority can be reduced to an exercise of power that marginalizes others or to a demand to be heard that is not matched by sufficient willingness to listen. We know these tendencies disfigure many structures and relationships in our world; we cannot imagine we will be immune from their influence when obedience places us in positions of authority within the Society or in institutions through which the Society carries out its mission. (GC 35, 108)

Having discovered the contemporary crisis to the obedience the GC 35 notes ‘some specific aspects of the practice of obedience in the Society’. First of all, it is rooted in the spiritual experience of St Ignatius and the First Companions. It is grounded in these three distinctive intrinsically connected aspects namely, “the desire to be sent effectively, to serve completely, and to create ever stronger bonds of union among ourselves. (NC 149–156)” (GC 35, 110). If any one of these is lacking, then it cannot be called Ignatian or Jesuit obedience.

These three stripes of aspects come together in the manifestation of conscience, which make it very essential to the life of obedience in the Society. A Jesuit reveals all that happens in his

soul, consolations and desolations, graces and temptations, to the superior who can be helped to be more prudent and confident in sending him on mission. Every year it is evaluated and confirmed.

These three strands come together in the account of conscience. For this reason, the account of conscience is essential to the practice of obedience in the Society. (NC 155 §1) A Jesuit reveals to his superior all that is happening in his soul, the graces that he has received and the temptations he has undergone, so that his superior can more prudently and confidently send him on mission. The account is repeated annually so that the Jesuit and his superior can evaluate and confirm that mission together. (GC 35, 111)

Could this degree of openness and transparency be possible and how is it possible? This is possible because the superior is also one of the companions. To achieve a high degree of transparency Ignatius instructs superiors to love their companions. Jesuits share responsibly all about themselves and superiors in turn, with equal responsibility listen and dialogue with them. They experience it more deeply especially ‘Ignatian representation’ when they share humbly their difficulty with regard to the mission given. Here, the trust is mutual; subjects trustingly obey and the superiors trustingly send.

This degree of transparency is possible because our superiors are also our companions. Ignatius wanted superiors to love their companions. To love is to act responsibly. Jesuits bear the responsibility to reveal themselves completely to their superiors; superiors bear the responsibility to hear their brothers attentively and to dialogue with them honestly. This is especially true when a Jesuit humbly represents to his superior any difficulty he has with the mission he has been given, a practice Ignatius valued and encouraged. (*Cons.* 543, 627) (GC 35, 112) The trust that marks obedience is mutual. Jesuits make an act of trust in their superiors when they obey; superiors make an act of trust in their brothers when they send them on mission. (GC 35, 113)

Once a Jesuit is sent on mission, he is very much left to his discretion. It is the Ignatian legacy. From his personal knowledge and trust in the prayerful desires of his companion Jesuit, he left him to his discretion. The Society as well, expects that every Jesuit will be so to be creative in their mission according to the demands of the time proposing newer initiatives beyond pre-set models and projects trusting in the superiors. Thus, the obedience in the Society becomes ‘creative fidelity’ – creative by individual’s freedom and resourcefulness – fidelity by a generous response to the directives of the superior.

Because Ignatius knew and trusted the prayerful desires of the Jesuits he sent on mission, he left much to their discretion. (*Cons.* 633–635) Following the example of Ignatius, the Society expects that Jesuits will exercise creativity in carrying out their mission as they see circumstances require, that they will go beyond what has been asked in the true spirit of the *magis*. (*Cons.* 622–623) Thus the superior’s trust expresses itself in effective delegation, and the Jesuit who obeys knows he can rely on his superior’s openness to creative initiatives he might propose. (GC 31, D. 17, n. 11) This is why obedience in the Society has rightly been

described as an exercise of creative fidelity.²⁸⁰ It is creative, because it calls on the individual's freedom and resourcefulness. It is fidelity because it calls for a generous response to the directives of the superior whose duty it is to make decisions, "keeping in view the purpose of the Constitutions, which is the greater divine service and the good of those who live in this Institute." (*Cons.* 746) (GC 35, 114)

Obedience – authority relationship is not just an end to end closed relationship between a Jesuit and his superior. It is a relationship in which the community takes an active part in the whole process in different level through a communal discernment or through an informal conversation or a much confidential *informations*. This makes one to accept a personal mission and to rejoice in the support of fellow Jesuits.

A consideration of the practice of obedience would be incomplete if it were limited to the relationship between the superior and the individual Jesuit. The community has its role to play. We obey our superiors in community so that our common life can effectively support our mission and become a sign of the possibility of human communion our world so sorely needs.²⁸¹ The community is also a privileged place for the practice of apostolic discernment, whether through formally structured communal discernment (NC 150–151) or through informal conversation that has the more effective pursuit of the mission as its goal. Such discernment will help us not only accept our personal missions but also rejoice in and support the missions received by our brothers. In this way, our common mission is strengthened and the union of minds and hearts confirmed and deepened. (GC 35, 115)

Ignatius considers that the obedience is both grace and gift for a Jesuit. It is a path to which the Lord calls each and he himself enables us to follow this path in his service. A generous response on the part of each one makes him to serve effectively and joyfully. (cf. GC 35, 116)

The instruction of the GC 35 on 'the fourth vow of obedience to the Pope with regard to missions' highlights the salient features of the Society such as wider and universal availability²⁸² (117), committing the life to generous service of all men and women, especially those most in need (127), placing the life and freedom at the service of mission of Christ (124), forming young Jesuits to understand and live mystical source of obedience of which transparency with superiors, esteem for account of conscience, the responsible exercise of personal initiative, and a spirit of discernment which accepts the decisions of the superior with good grace (125), 'the proper attitude we ought to have in the Church' as defined in GC 34, D.11 (126), growing in interior freedom and trust in God to go to any part of the world and

²⁸⁰ All of this clarifies the significance of phrases like "an old man's staff" or "*perinde ac cadaver*" that can be found in the Constitutions. The context makes it clear that to obey is not to become lifeless; rather, it is to offer oneself to be carried by the mission conferred by the superior. "For in this way the obedient man ought joyfully to employ himself in any task in which the superior desires to employ him in aid of the whole body of the religious order" (*Cons.* 547). Quoted as footnote to GC 35, 114.

²⁸¹ PETER-HANS KOLVENBACH S.I., "*Sur la vie communautaire*" (12 March 1998), *AR* 22 (1996–2002): 276–289. Quoted in GC 35, 114.

²⁸² BENEDICT XVI, *Allocution to the Members of the Society of Jesus* (22 April 2006), *AR* 29, no. (2006), 677. Quoted in GC 35, 117.

undertake any ministry (*Cons.* 622) (127), strengthening affection for the pope and respect for the pastors of the Church (128), gratitude towards local and major superiors for their service of leadership (129), considering the account of conscience as vital for the practice of obedience in which “the mission is conferred, confirmed, or changed”²⁸³ (130), referring to the local superior all questions that lie within his competence (131), loyal cooperation to Jesuit and non-Jesuit directors of work contributing to maintaining the work’s Jesuit identity (132) and the attitude of being truly on mission when one is in the infirmary and prays for the well-being of the Society because of advanced age (133).

Major superiors are encouraged to do their mission of leadership with confidence and joy. They are recommended to assign their men to mission with clarity. They must take into consideration of the ‘Jesuit-ness’ on non-Jesuit while appointing them as directors of works. They must allow the local superiors to do their role with the spirit of subsidiarity. Further emphasizing the importance of the role of the local superior, the GC 35 makes the major superiors responsible for their formation and the necessary preparation for the leadership mission. (cf. GC 35, 134-137)

The local superior must care for the Jesuits before final vows. He shares this responsibility with the whole community that provide an atmosphere to grow as a person and as a religion. He must request the account of conscience twice a year. (cf. GC 35, 138). He must govern the community with clear directives made with the collaboration of the community. These directives should be evaluated annually during the visitation of the major superior. (cf. GC 35, 139)

8. Conclusion

To conclude, let us review this chapter in brief. In the GC 27 letter on obedience of St Ignatius was presented as a recommendation to the General to publish along with the other documents of special importance to the Society. Many of the *Substantials* of the First rank and the Second rank included categorically the role of obedience, representation and authority in the Society and in the Church. The GC 28 instructs that the commands by virtue of obedience is to be given in grave matters, after due consultation and consideration. It is valid until revoked by the successor or a major superior. The GC 30 insisted the decree of the GC 27 that the disobedience

²⁸³ PETER-HANS KOLVENBACH S.I., “*Le compte de conscience*” (21 February 2005), *AR* 23, no. 1 (2003): 558. Quoted in GC 34, 130.

must be punished. However, the GC 31 revoked the punishment with the view that the love and the longing for all perfection may lead all Jesuits to preserve the Institute. It reinstated the qualities required for the authentic life of obedience such as self-denial, readiness for service, discernment of Spirit, freedom and maturity, spirit of initiative and responsibility. A separate decree (17) on obedience realizes the challenges and approaches them with a spirit of love and of prudence. The GC 32 executed a perfect example of an Ignatian representation to the Pope on the theme of the Fourth vow to all. When it was refused by Pope Paul VI, it was accepted in total faithful and docile obedience. It was aware of the role of the local superior and spiritual governance through an authentic manifestation of conscience. The GC 33 was gathered in a troubled time due to an unconstitutional intervention of the Roman Pontiff in naming Fr Paolo Dezza as his vicar to the Society. The whole Society lived it demonstrating their docile obedience to the Pope and his orders. The GC 34 was marked by the renewal of the Constitutions. It recommended the tradition of dialogue with the Holy See in the matters of naming the Jesuits to the episcopacy. In the decree on 'Having a proper attitude of service in the Church' recognized many challenges that a Jesuit scholar or theologian faced were because of their sincere desire to live in fidelity to the Magisterium. It too followed the Ignatian tradition of representation and the previous Congregation on the theme of the Fourth vow to represent the matter to the Pope. It was also rejected.

Finally, the GC 35 also received like recent Congregations very many postulates on the theme of obedience, authority and governance. Moreover, there was a special request of the Pope Benedict XVI to reflect on the Fourth vow. Therefore, it came out with a decree on obedience that can be considered as a compendium of the teaching of obedience that is presented to our context. It gives a comprehensive theology of obedience, study of the crisis and concrete instructions to the formators, major and local superiors. In and through all, it is very truthful to the Society, to the Church and above all to God.

General Conclusion

The aim of this paper is studying the idea of Ignatian obedience - representation and finding their sources in the Bible, the Magisterium and their expressions in the documents of the General Congregations. The experiences of the candidates and all the subjects of obedience and authority in the context of patriarchal society, casteistic country and pseudo-democratic world have given them an idea that the obedience and submission are age based, caste based and power based. Normally, they tend to identify the vow of obedience to any one of the above, to which one is exposed to and accustomed with.

We mentioned in the introduction about an observation that during the time of formation it is easy for the formees to obey their superior, because they are seniors, more intelligent... etc. Once they are formed and become seniors many problems emerge. When someone equal to one's own age or a junior becomes a superior, they show up as disobedience and other unwanted behaviours both as subjects and as superiors. In some extreme cases, they are like those priests, mentioned in the introduction, who abducted the bishop who is supposed to be respected and obeyed as the representative of the Church and Christ. They were slaves to the cultural conditioning who could not but only see superiors as agents of one or another group. The society outside with all its caste minded attitudes and behaviors is reflected within the Church and the religious congregations too. It may be true, in the time and place of St Ignatius there were no such problems of social nature so strong as caste. However, those are equivalent to that of our days. His too was a male dominated patriarchal feudal society in which the poor had no voice. He was an integral part and parcel of that. He had to fight against all its maliciousness, without fleeing from it. He founded the Society of Jesus then and there with hope, trust and total confidence in God.

St Ignatius' ideas of obedience have formed and taken shape from his life experiences, marked by spiritual, ecclesial and divine interventions. It is the unifying principle and symbolizing principle by which Jesuits are to be known. He is not proposing a mere frozen principle, but a living dynamism of daily discernment of the will of God. The openness for representation can be deceptively simple. It is the supreme form of expression of inner freedom and openness to the Spirit. However, often it is mistaken as just expressing one's difference of opinions and concerns or like any other social demonstration demanding for justice and freedom from any form of structural or conventional oppression. On the contrary, it is an invitation to take stock of and take hold of one's own interior self with all its truthfulness with the end of the Society in mind and heart. In full confidence in God and in the superior who is in the place of Christ, one represents his interior motions with the superior. It helps the effectiveness of the mission by fulfilling the most holy will of God. St Ignatius set us a good example of representation in two episodes very tangibly, namely in declining the episcopacy of Claudio Jay and cardinalship of Francis Borgia. Thus, the first chapter offers the candidates a general picture of Ignatian obedience which has nothing to do with the one that is imposed.

We obey Christ in the superior, therefore, it must be total and perfect obedience which includes execution, will and the intellect. It is an act of faith invited and initiated by God, not divinely imposed as claimed by *Aryan* myths to enslave a vast majority of people in the name of caste system. It is the highest human expression towards God that creates and generates last longing fruitful impacts in the lives of the people generations after generation. The Bible states this fact and stands witness to it. It is full of examples of historical events and personalities of obedience and representation, in a broad sense of the term, through intercessory prayers and dialogue with God. The Book of Genesis based it on the covenant relationship of God with Abraham. The Exodus event of the *Pascua* and the commandments Sinai marked its assurance. The books of Prophets and of Wisdom bore the memory of these historical experiences. Jesus based his idea of obedience on the *Abba* experience and invited the people of Israel back to the spirit of the law. His passion, death and resurrection, the new *Pascua*, became the source experience of obedience to the Church. Jesus and Mary stand great models to the Apostles and the early Church. The Apostles taught all Christians to obey civil authorities as they were in the place of God. Thus, in the second chapter the candidates encounter biblical roots of obedience which is also opposed to their experiences in their own culture.

The Church always recognized it. However, as a human organization it was like the people of Israel. In peaceful situation, it had compromised with the powerful and the rich to travel

through easier, broader and luxurious path. Therefore, often it forgot to take side with the poor and the oppressed. When there was the fall of monarchy and emergence of atheism the hierarchical Church too had to pay the price of losing its power and its supremacy. Then, the Church rose to protect common people with its teachings, encyclicals and documents on social issues. They proclaimed the divine origin of all power and authority, God's will as found in natural law and expressed in the revealed law and human response to them from the depth of their conscience as good news to the poor. We must obey them before all else. Any power that negates these affirmations and go against them loses its authenticity and does not deserve obedience of the people. The Church promotes a dialogic obedience. If people are not listened to they need not obey such authority that goes against God, natural and revealed law. The pre-Vatican II encyclicals especially of Pope Leo XIII based their arguments in Scholastic philosophical and theological categories following St Thomas Aquinas. The documents of the second Vatican council included social sciences and anthropology in explaining the obedience to the lay faithful, seminarians, priests, religious and the Church as the whole one unit. Thus, the third chapter has presented the growth of understanding of obedience which integrally includes dialogue and representation.

The fourth chapter on the obedience in the documents of the General Congregations 27 – 35 of the Society of Jesus has given us the contemporary Jesuit perspective on the theme. Each GC has addressed theme in order to make the Society and its mission meaningful for the actual context. They have recognized and restated its biblical, Christological and ecclesiological roots as experienced in and through the Spiritual Exercises. They have explained, interpreted and contextualized to the contemporary anthropological, psychological, socio, political and globalized multi-cultural realities in which we live and actualize our vocation. Ongoing discernment marks the life of obedience and authority in the local community, the Church and in the world. A lot of structural changes, based on the essentials found in the Formula of the Institute, have been adapted to enhance the governing in all levels – the GC, the General, the Conferences, Procurators Congregations, Province Congregations, the local and major superiors. Every member is addressed on the obedience and authority to take part an active role in the process of individual and communitarian discernment process to unite oneself with the Superior concerned in his decision making. Major superiors must respect the role of the local superior by following the principle of subsidiarity. Local superiors must be animators of the community in all its mission, formation of all especially those who are not yet finally professed. They must make the whole community to own and accompany the frontier mission entrusted to a few by the Society, and even to suffer for justice if the situation demands so. The GCs have

left a great legacy of representation in very many teachings and practices. The matter of the Fourth vow has been a vivid example of constant and faithful representation and faithful acceptance of Pope's decision on the matter. They have recognized that the very fact of being truthful to our vow of obedience and faithful to the mother Church often makes us look disobedient and rebellious. Thus, the fourth and the final chapter culminates the paper presenting the current development in the Jesuit spirituality and mysticism of obedience.

The paper has presented the Ignatian ideas of obedience and representation, its biblical experiential roots, the encyclicals that offer its philosophical and theological roots, contemporary challenges and guidelines to live it in day to day, and the documents of GCs that roots itself in the experiences of St Ignatius and his companions and in the Spiritual Exercises. These texts offer a touch stone to the candidates to engage in a dialogue with the idea of obedience, authority, disobedience and representation. They also present an ongoing formation character and methodology which could help oneself and form others. They propel them to action to form oneself to make necessary changes in one's own understanding and living of this virtue of obedience.

In continuation of our investigation, we could listen to some candidates at different levels of their personal authentic experiences of living out the ideals of obedience and their challenges in integrating. This would be of great help to sharpen the formal and ongoing formation programmes with regard to obedience. Further investigation on the new structures of governance in the light of Ignatian obedience and representation and propagation of it in all levels would be a great help to find deeper value of the theme as a virtue that liberates oneself, helps one in self-realization and in self-transcendence and thus makes one to live one's Christian vocation fruitfully in salvation of oneself and to help others.

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