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AUGUST 2023



Dear Beloved Brothers,

Grace and peace be multiplied unto you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. During this time, may you find some time to rest both spiritually and physically. Such need rest will allow us to serve our brothers and sisters in our various ministries and endeavors within the kingdom of God.

As you dedicate your lives to the service of God and His people, let us delve into the profound value of obedience, a virtue that resonates throughout both Sacred Scripture and the teachings and the exemplary life of our Founders. Next to worship of the Eucharist, our Founders put Obedience as the highest in the hierarchy of our life. Saint Francis Caracciolo recognized the value of obedience when he wrote “Most clement God, I most firmly propose that, after you have made me understand your will through the Superior, I shall obey him as I would obey yourself”. For our Founders, Obedience signified that we must do the work of God with a joyful YES to the Lord. This understanding, based on their deep faith, was certainly reflected in their daily attitude and desires. We certainly can learn much from them.

Scripture reminds us of the significance of obedience in the life of Christ, who humbled Himself and became obedient unto death for our sake (Philippians 2:8). In His example, we see the epitome of self-surrender, as He willingly submitted to the Father's will, even in the face of immense suffering. Such obedience was not an act of compulsion but a testament to His profound love and unity with the Father. This reflects an act that is freely chosen and given to give life to many. We CRM have valued this very much over the centuries. With the 4th vow of not seeking ecclesiastical dignity, we seek nothing but to serve the Lord in building his kingdom. Therefore, our obedience is like “building blocks” to fashion the Kingdom of God into a reality of joyful service.



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During my seminary days in Seton Hall University, I remember reading a theological book in fundamental theology written by the great theologian, Karl Rahner. In his theological insights, he emphasizes the transformative power of obedience. He emphasizes that obedience is not simply a compliance with external rules but an inner disposition of trust and love towards God. Through obedience, we acknowledge our dependence on God and align our will with His divine plan for our lives. Here, Rahner also highlights the idea of the "anonymous Christian," where even those who may not explicitly profess Christianity but strive to live in obedience to their conscience and the truth are, in a sense, participating in Christ's redeeming work. Even at times of difficulty, to Obey our human superiors, with all their frailty and limitations, let us always remember they were chosen to serve and to make decisions that will always foster unity and good for our religious family. Again, Saint Francis Caracciolo wrote in his Act of Obedience the following words **"I recognize, Lord, that my Superior for your sake is most worthy of being honored and therefore I want to be subject to his authority and command.... Even if in my judgment and according to my worldly wisdom, my Superior errs, I will believe that I hear in him words of life and teachings of eternal salvation. In the same way, with the same readiness with which I would obey You myself, O Most Faithful Lord, if I saw You with these bodily eyes, I obey the Superior and do his will. Far be it from me, O Lord, that I should disapprove or contradict what my Superior wills or approves."**

My dearest brothers, in this month of August we also commemorate a great Saint, John Mary Vianney, who out of his obedience to his Bishop, went to a remote and far away, place which by many was considered as one of the worse assignments, and especially as a newly ordained priest in Ars. Yet, he who was considered poor in intellect and poor in so many ways, made himself available to God through his joyful spirit of Obedience. There, his response of Obedience to his Bishop bore much fruit. God made use of this feeble presence and he changed the image of the place that soon become popular and significant. As members of the Clerics Regular Minor, embracing the value of obedience means embracing the mission entrusted to you. It means seeking God's will in every decision and allowing His love to permeate through your actions.



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It is not important how big or small we play in this very small insignificant and yet beautiful family of the Clerics Regular Minor. Obedience is a journey of faith and self-emptying, where one grows in holiness by following the footsteps of Christ. Obey not because you fully understand, or if it is reasonable, but because Christ wants to use our frail humanity for his work. Christ calls us at this moment to be moved by the littleness of our humanity where Christ took over to rescue is. Just Obey.

In moments of doubt or difficulty, remember the words of Jesus in John 14:15, "If you love me, keep my commandments." Obedience is the language of love that we speak to our Lord, and through it, we draw closer to Him and experience the fullness of His grace.

Dear brothers, allow the spirit of obedience be the cornerstone of your spirituality, underpinning your every thought and action. May the words of Karl Rahner inspire you to embrace obedience not as a burden but as a gateway to deeper communion with God.

May the Holy Spirit, the source of wisdom and grace, guide you in your journey of obedience and empower you to be true witnesses of Christ's love in the world. Father Nello Morrea once wrote **"Always remember that the vow of obedience is the one that most certainly requires a spirit of faith to accept the decisions of the Superiors and other authorities of the Order as the will of God. It also requires the virtue of humility in the spirit proper to the fourth vow."**

With prayers and blessings,

Ted, crm



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