

Haye, George J.
Obedience
ADR 1992

O BEDIENCE



REV. GEORGE J. HAYE



OBEDIENCE

BY

REV. GEORGE J. HAYE

"Be subject to every creature for God's sake—as free, and not as making liberty a cloak for malice, but as the servants of God." (St. Peter 2, 13-16).

THE PAULIST PRESS
401 WEST 59TH STREET
NEW YORK 19, N. Y.

Nihil Obstat:

ARTHUR J. SCANLAN, S.T.D.,
Censor Librorum.

Imprimatur:

✠ FRANCIS J. SPELLMAN, D.D.,
Archbishop of New York.

New York, September 20, 1944.

COPYRIGHT, 1944, BY
THE MISSIONARY SOCIETY OF ST. PAUL THE APOSTLE
IN THE STATE OF NEW YORK

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED IN THE U. S. A.
BY THE PAULIST PRESS, NEW YORK 19, N. Y.

Decacidified

DEDICATED TO THE
FREE SERVANTS OF CHRIST



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2016

<https://archive.org/details/obedience00haye>

OBEDIENCE

THE MASTER OBEYS

JESUS CHRIST, The Man one-hundred per cent and Infinite God, gave a complete answer to The Call of Duty. The complete answer was a whole *Life of Obedience* to the Father's Will. It began in obedience: "Behold I come to do Thy Will." It ended in obedience: "It is finished." (I am born to obey; I live under obedience; I die under obedience.)

With a free and loving obedience, He came to earth and accepted the *poor* hospitality of a stable for animals. "As the Father has commanded Me, so I do." (The rich and the poor must obey.)

With a free and loving obedience, He became an exile, a *refugee* in pagan Egypt. "I also have kept My Father's commandments." (Rulers, citizens and even refugees must obey.)

With a free and loving obedience, He accepted the Father's Will as given through *human instruments*. "He was subject to them"—to Mary and to St. Joseph. (Parents and children must obey.)

With a free and loving obedience, He embraced a life of discipline and hard, routine *work* in the carpenter-shop at Nazareth. "He humbled Himself, becoming obedient even unto death." "My food is to do The Will of Him Who sent Me." (Employers and employees must obey.)

With a free and loving obedience, He left home and His Mother Mary to begin His *missionary career*. "I came down from heaven, not to do My Own Will, but The Will of Him that sent Me." (Priests and religious must obey.)

With a free and loving obedience, He received *The Cross* and all the detailed sufferings of the Sacred Passion. "Not My Will, but Thine be done." (The healthy and those in suffering must obey.)

Christ, The Master, is God's Ideal of The Perfect, Real Man (besides being Eternal God). He is The Example of Obedience for *all real men* and *all real women*. He wants all to imitate Him in faithfully following the Father's Will, even in the smallest details of daily life. (All must obey God.)

SIMPLE MEANING OF OBEDIENCE

The Virtue of Obedience may be looked upon as *A Tree*; whose roots are humility; whose life is charity; whose maturity is patience; whose fruits are peace and joy; whose protecting cover is courage. If anyone models his life on this tree, he most closely resembles The Master and begins to share in the Happiness of God.

Obedience is the *faithful answer to The Call of Duty*. It is a prompt and ready answer; it is a diligent and exact answer. It is submission to law and authority. "The highest duty is to respect authority and obediently to submit to just law." A life of complete liberty, without obedience, is very dangerous; it is a much harder life than a life of obedience.

The *virtue of piety* demands obedience to the Eternal Truths of God, to the Laws of God and of His One, True Church. It also demands obedience to superiors, speaking as they do for God; in practical life, superiors are The Mouthpiece of God. Obedience is the *only real guarantee of genuine freedom*. (Let the Bell for Duty be for us The Voice of God.)

Obedience heeds law and respects authority. "*Lawful authority is from God* and whosoever resisteth authority resisteth the ordinance of God. . . . Law is of its very essence a mandate of right reason, proclaimed by a properly constituted authority, for *the common good*. But true and legitimate authority is void of sanction, unless it proceed from God the supreme Ruler and Lord of all. The Almighty alone can commit power to a man over his fellowmen. A just and due reverence to the laws abides in them (Christians), not from force and threats, but from a consciousness of duty; for God has not given us the spirit of fear."—Encyclical Pope Leo XIII.

Obedience is a virtue found in angels and in men, having a mind that reasons and a will that is free. A plant follows natural laws, but not with freedom; a plant "must" obey under force. A slave under a tyrant-master or dictator becomes like a plant in practice, since he is forced to obey.

(But God never intended men to be plants.) Angels and men can obey or disobey because they have a rational soul; because they enjoy *free will*. They are servants, not slaves. Their obedience is free, not forced.

Man's obedience to God is based upon *humble dependence on God*. It is a surrender to God in all sincerity and simplicity. Man obeys God directly as through His commandments or through conscience. He obeys God indirectly, when he obeys the authority of God vested in some human person. Many times it is harder for human nature to obey God's authority in others than to obey God directly; human beings are not good like God. That is why obedience proves to be such a practical test of our faith, and hope, and love for God. When we obey God's authority in others, we obey God Himself. (How few realize this today!)

Obedience does not destroy reason and free will. Obedience does not make man unreasonable, but insures his reasonableness. It elevates his mind and will to a more perfect freedom. In humbling them reasonably to God, it elevates and exalts them. "He that humbles himself, shall be exalted."

The right of commanding and the duty of obeying have *limits*. Any law which goes against the moral law cannot demand obedience. We need not obey in cases where the person commanding has no lawful authority over us. We may not obey when told to do anything which goes against the laws of God; when told to do anything forbidden by a higher superior; when told to do anything physically or morally impossible. We must all obey the commandments of God and of the Church, as well as the duties of our particular state in life. While lay people are not strictly bound, but seriously persuaded to obey the Counsels of Perfection, religious are obliged to obey these Counsels.

The angels were put to a simple, little test in obedience. Those who failed are now devils in hell. Adam and Eve were also put to such a test. They failed. We see the sad results even to this day: sickness, suffering of all kinds, and death. *Sin is disobedience* to a law of God and *disobedience brings suffering*, crosses and death; sometimes it brings

eternal death. By obedience, on the contrary, we help Christ in His Mystical Body, to *make reparation* for sin and to "*fulfill all justice.*"

IMPORTANCE OF OBEDIENCE

There must be a *superior* who can command obedience; a superior is necessary to establish order and unity. The Army or Navy, a football or baseball team—must all have a leader or captain or manager; otherwise there is no united effort, no harmony and order, no efficiency, no thorough accomplishment, no steady advance, no powerful results.

"Order is heaven's first law." Sanctifying grace makes us begin the life of heaven on earth. Since part of that heavenly life is order, we need *order and discipline* and obedience in our life on earth. To be truly God-like we must obey God even in His representatives. The *Imitation of Christ* says: "It is a very great thing to live in obedience, to be under a superior, and not to be one's own master."

Obedience is the "*virtue-making-virtue.*" One who obeys in all things, soon begins to practice all the other virtues. Obedience kills self-will; it makes one radically unselfish. It unites the human will to the Divine Will. (Hence its great power for good!) "Let us do all that the Lord has spoken and we shall be obedient." (Let us pray for the grace to be obedient in all things.)

Obedience is *the surest way to holiness and happiness*; it unites us to God. It is so important because it simplifies life and *leads to simplicity*. God is a Simple Being. The closer one comes to sanctity and to God, the more simple does he become. Being around children or old people; being near the poor and sick and afflicted—these things can help to make us simple. People in the world today are so unlike God because they so sadly lack simplicity. Pagan education in our schools has destroyed much of this simplicity in people; proving conclusively that it is not real education, since it takes us further away from God instead of bringing us closer to Him as it should. Because of this atheistic education, the whole lives of modern people, their work, their pleasures, their reading habits, their recreations, their conversations, are too

unnatural, too complicated and artificial. If the same people would re-learn the importance of obedience in life, their lives would become much more simple and they would find themselves much closer to God. (Give us people living simple lives and you will give us saints—the world has a crying need for the genuine simplicity of the saints.)

When people reject the simplicity associated with obedience, they soon find themselves so involved in material things that they no longer find time to think of God. We can see this in the present war. Very many people are working more than God ever intended, and yet all their work seems to be bringing them further from God instead of closer to Him. They are working for the world and the world repays them with slavery. They could work for God under obedience and they would enjoy the liberty of the sons of God. The world steals away their simple joys. These joys can be found only in an obedient return to God. God alone can restore calmness and peace and security to the hearts of wearied men and women. God alone can take away worry and anxiety, and wipe away bitter tears from human eyes. God offers men a way back home—the road of obedience blessed by the sunshine of a beautiful simplicity.

The important virtue of obedience produced a charming simplicity in the Life of Christ. His virtues blended so harmoniously because of His constant obedience to the Father's Will. In our lives by contrast, there are so many inconsistencies, so many extravagances, so many errors, so many exaggerations. We obscure Christ in us by our inhuman, worldly adaptations. May Christ in us again attain to that attractive simplicity which comes without fail as a consequence of perfect obedience to the Father's Will!

Obedience is very important; it is *better than sacrifice*. Those obedient in little things, later obey in the greater things. One who learns how to obey, learns how to rule—and it is safer to obey than to rule. He who departs from obedience, departs from grace. He who conquers himself by an obedient spirit, can more easily conquer temptations from without. One who obeys the first order, finds the second order much easier to obey. As St. Paul says, we

must eat, sleep, work, suffer, rejoice—all out of obedience to God. Lifelong obedience is a loving martyrdom; it is sanctity. The man living in close contact and union with Christ by obedience, is preaching even in his silence; he is converting company by his very presence; he is influencing passers-by even though he tries not to make an impression.

Obedience wards off many troubles. Many of *our difficulties come from disobedience*. Let us take just one practical example. Holy Mother Church asks us to obey liturgical laws for worship; these laws happily combine reason and emotion, thus giving proper worship to God and yet adequately appealing to the “whole” man. In only too many cases we, the individuals, stress only reason in our worship; or at other times, stress only the emotions. But if we were more obedient to the real laws of the Church, we would actually be more holy and even more human in the good sense of the word. By disobedience we become inhuman machines on the one hand; or sentimental sob-sisters on the other hand. Real liturgical law treats God as God and treats man as man, and shows man how to correctly approach God. It appeals to the heart as well as to the mind, and to the human as well as to the divine. Obedience to these laws and to all other laws of God and of the Church would insure us against falling into error or becoming queer. Our many troubles usually come from such disobedience.

EXAMPLES OF PERFECT OBEDIENCE

In the Old Testament we have the example of Abraham and Isaac. Although Abraham has great love for his son Isaac, his love for God is much greater and more fundamental. He is willing to *sacrifice human love*, if it will *insure the Divine Love*. He is willing to give up his son and to sacrifice his own will that he might more easily embrace God and God's Will. Another example is the obedience of Samuel, who said: “Speak, Lord, Thy servant heareth.”

In the New Testament we have the example of Mary and Joseph, who obeyed Caesar, the pagan ruler, and went to be enrolled even under the difficulty of a long and dangerous

journey. They obeyed the Will of God expressed through *a very weak and human instrument*.

The Gospels give us the example of the centurion, who reminded Christ that when he gave an order, it was immediately carried out. There was no delaying about it—no hesitation waltz—but action, results, prompt obedience. Later we see the example of St. Paul, who *learned obedience the hard way*. After he was blinded, and only then, did he learn to say: "What wouldst Thou have me to do?" After he learned this lesson, he was able to warn all others that, even if an angel comes from heaven and says anything contrary to the doctrine of the Church, the angel must not be believed. After he learned his lesson well, he could very well preach about real obedience to the Church of God. (Yes, let us *suspect even miracles, where obedience is lacking*.)

St. Teresa of Avila and St. Theresa of the Child Jesus *wrote* the history of their lives "*under obedience*." It was humiliating for them to tell their faults publicly and even more humiliating to explain the great secrets of God, but obedience is based on humility. Because their works were written under obedience, they have such evident guidance of the Holy Spirit.

HUMILITY—FOUNDATION OF OBEDIENCE

Obedience is *practical humility* or *humility in practice*. To submit to God and His representatives, one must be humble. That is why humility and obedience have a direct proportion between them. The greater the humility, the greater the obedience. The greater the obedience, the greater the humility. The more humbly obedient one is, the greater his power for good. Where pride reigns, the devil rules and disobedience enters. Where humility reigns, God rules and obedience enters. (The saints were made by humiliations, lovingly accepted for Christ.)

Humble obedience seeks the *Will of God, not self-will*. It obeys God and His representatives out of a sense of rev-

erence. Because obedience involves the submission of self-will to the Will of God, it is a foundation virtue; as a religious vow, it is more radical and basic than the vows of chastity and poverty. St. Gregory says: "To forsake what one has, is a small thing; to forsake what one is, that is the supreme gift." (God loves the heart which sounds the depths of humility and reaches the heights of charity.)

To obey a superior only when we consider an order reasonable, sets us up as "little self-willed gods." *That is not obedience, which demands that orders be practical, wise and reasonable.* We may with all humility ask these things; we may not demand an answer. Whether the answer is to our satisfaction or not, we must obey. We must never try to force the superior to our views; nor "gang-up" on the superior; nor "freeze-out" the superior. This is cunning disobedience, selfish strategy and cute hypocrisy. We may, however, use lawful persuasion based on good motives. It is to our shame, when superiors must explain the reason for every order. (Imagine the corner-policeman giving a theological treatise on "Why I must stop for a red light!")

St. Peter says: "Servants, be subject to your masters, not only to the good and mild, but even to the ill-tempered and choleric." Hence we must not set ourselves up as judges of superiors, nor even allow ourselves the right to criticize them—but obey! The office of a superior is far more weighty and far more full of danger than the office of subject. And we, the inferiors and subjects, might very likely make even worse superiors and rulers. *Only one who knows how to obey, is fit to rule.* When we have a superior we do not like, it is possibly a better type of obedience we are rendering, because the motive is less selfish and hence purer. By nature we prefer to command but most of us cannot. We are all able to learn how to obey, but this we are not so anxious to learn. We ought to obey gladly and to allow God to be the judge of our superiors, because His Judgment is just.

Humility makes allowances for the faults of others and considers others better than oneself. We do not obey a superior or ruler just because he is good or holy or reason-

able or wise—but because he *is* the superior. What merit can we expect, if we demand a superior made to our own tastes and dispositions? Why even the pagans can do this. But let us who are Christians, see Christ in our superiors and follow orders in all simplicity, without any “buts.”

St. Paul says: “Servants, be obedient to your earthly masters with respect and fear, with sincerity of heart, as to the Christ; not with eye-service, as pleasers of men, but as slaves of Christ, doing the Will of God from the heart, performing your service with good will as to the Lord and not to men.”

Humble obedience is *the real test of holiness*. Anything else is dangerous. Those who trust their own judgments too much in matters spiritual, and even in other matters, are soon deceived by the devil. One who turns from obedience and tries to be his own ruler, is ruled by a fool, a madman and a devil. That is why we must be ruled by holy obedience. That is why we must be just as ready to do the lowly jobs as well as the great and important jobs; because obedience is the brand-mark of genuine holiness. (The truck-driver may be more holy than the college professor; the nun in the kitchen may be more holy than the nun with all the degrees—it all depends on obedience.)

Obedience makes for holiness, but *does not destroy our prudence*. We may humbly approach our superior and explain our difficulties; but having done that much, we must be prepared to obey the superior's decision and final answer. Sometimes it is pride that keeps us from speaking more freely to our superiors about our difficulties.

At times people with a strong, natural temper worry about their ability to take orders from another. Those with such a strong will for sin are often able to *use that same strong will for self-control and obedience*. Those with strong tempers by nature, can turn these tempers to good advantage against themselves. Extravagant in sin, they can, like Mary Magdalen and Peter, become extravagant in virtue and in love. Let them only learn the art of re-directing their passions from the bad to the good. A strong will is even a necessity, if one wishes to be humbly obedient at all

times, under all circumstances and to all different types of superiors.

Another help to obedience is *suffering*. Suffering often makes us more humble and when we are more humble, we have a greater chance for being obedient. The saints welcomed sufferings, because they could thereby deepen their humility, and thus prepare the way for a more perfect obedience. Bishop Hedley explains the great value of "suffering in silence"; he says: "No man can save his fellow man without silence, because it is *only in silence* that we can make a proper use of suffering, and there is *no apostolate without suffering*."

NOBLE PRIDE—THE SPUR TO OBEDIENCE

There is *something noble in pride*. It has great power and energy. Pride makes one desire to walk majestically, to appear beautifully, to illuminate with its wisdom, to astound with its talent, to conquer with its importance. Pride is the moral peacock, attracting all to its glamor and gaiety and gorgeousness.

There must be something noble in pride. It urges men to erect fine homes; it impels men to explore unknown lands; it inspires men to perfection in writing, in drama, in art. Some fine men have had this pride in doing a task well. *There must be a Lawful Type of Pride*. If there is, we must understand it and use it, because False Humility is harming the Cause of Christ in great measure today.

False humility or sinful pride is a shadow or substitute of the real; it is a mask or cover-up; it is a blurred photograph; it is an artificial product; it is a recopy of an original painting; it is counterfeit money; it is a pose; it is an act of hypocrisy; it is a lie. (The exaggeration of self-will, as opposed to obedience to law, is greatly due in recent centuries to the Protestant Reformation.)

Men are growing tired of this false humility, which *paralyzes* with varied fears, *cripples* our powers for good, and *asks us to pretend* that we have no talents. Men are again turning to the true Church of God, because they are *rightly*

conscious of some tremendous dignity. They are becoming increasingly aware of the influence of Divine Grace, making the baptized really important. This Lawful Pride is something genuine; the original painting; the true product. It is sincerely simple, graceful, calm, generous, honest, stately yet not a "show-off"; yes, it is humility. It is an honest appreciation of our worth in the Eyes of God. It attributes all that is good to God and all that is evil and sinful to itself. This Lawful Pride or Humility is *ever conscious of sharing in the dignity of God*, thanks to the Grace of God. Hence it is not anxious for praise or human recognition. It understands the sacred character of human personality and its power for good when directed by the Hand of God. It is more powerful than false pride, because it is not built on the weakness of human strength but on the power of Almighty God.

Humility is a word meaning "*dust.*" When man remembers that he is *dust raised up by God* and made tremendously important, then he has Lawful Pride. He knows then that he is "sanctified dust." Then alone may he lawfully sing the *Magnificat of Mary; the humblest and proudest piece of literature* in the world. Mary understood that God had looked upon her humility (dust-nothingness) and had "done great things" for her. Mary understood that alone she was "nothing" but that with God she could "be all" and "do all." (Let Mary be your teacher of Lawful Pride.)

As a practical means of getting this Lawful Pride, men must daily learn to make "*adventures into nothingness.*" Know yourself! Each day must teach anew that we "of ourselves are nothing." Each day must teach anew that "with God we can do all things." But this teaching must be put into regular practice. Every time we commit a sin of any kind, or fall, or make some human mistake, or feel physically or morally weak, or suffer some embarrassment, let us say immediately: "this proves again that I am nothing." But then let us turn with calm sorrow, yet with confidence, to God and add: "Now that I admit I am nothing, Lord, You can use me for your greatest work, even for sanctity; You always use nothing to make something; You

even create saints from nothing." If we kept up this practice after every fall and sin, our very falls would become our stepping-stones to sanctity. (It is too bad that we do not profit more by our falls.)

By making these "daily adventures into nothingness," *we could advance much more rapidly and with much greater security*; we would be less depressed and melancholy; we would develop Christ's eternal sense of humor; we would become more humane and more human in the good sense of the word; we would become more holy and saintly and Christ-like; we would be building our spiritual life on the solid basis of humility.

Let us be *consciously aware* of our own nothingness "of ourselves." But let us also be consciously proud of our human dignity, value, worth and importance; of our useful instrumentality in the Hands of God. Let us remember that, if God can do all things, He can do all things even through me. Let us remember that, if God can make something out of nothing, He can make saints out of our "nothingness." Let us offer Him our good will and our generous efforts.

When we are conscious of these great truths, we become *obedient, docile, humble, pliable instruments in the Hands of the Master-Craftsman*. We offer Him "our nothingness" and "our good will." We try to make ourselves less imperfect instruments or tools. Then we suddenly awake to a new realization of power and we become dynamos of energy for the Cause of Christ. And God even works miracles of grace through us. If a man, therefore, has a job to do, let him do it; let him use all his talents; let him supply his best efforts and good will; then let Christ accomplish all things through him. (Christians, arise; the day of hidden talents and false humility is gone; you are the free servants of Christ.) "Dust, Remember Thou Art Splendor."

CHARITY—THE LIFE OF OBEDIENCE

To be genuine and Christ-like, obedience must contain love or charity. Love makes us obey promptly, completely, and with enthusiasm. The body must not be a mere machine, moving at the press of a button; but the heart and

will must make it perform a human act of love. Our obedience ought, therefore, be interior as well as exterior, and nourished on supernatural motives, especially a great love for God. This charity gives great value to all our works—and gives life to them also. “God loves a cheerful giver.” (God’s Heart is touched by loving obedience.)

Sacrifice is the practical, external expression of internal obedience. The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is the most perfect expression of one’s willingness to live the Life of Christ in perfect obedience. The spirit of sacrifice is of the essence of real love and loving obedience is the greatest sacrifice and the greatest mortification. The morning offering really means: “Out of a spirit of loving sacrifice, I obey God’s Will today in all things.”

(The greatest sinners, the street-tramps, the down-trodden—very often are found to have a spirit of generous sacrifice and loyalty. Suppose we were to make greater efforts to *reclaim these people*. They often have some of the “stuff” of which saints are made. Perhaps we could train their generous spirit by discipline and a loving obedience. *It would not take long to convince such people of their “nothingness.”* It would take some time and effort to convince them of their “human dignity and importance” when lifted up by the Hands of God. Such people have been able to become saintly in the past; what has been done once, can with the grace of God be done again. Who needs us most? Who needs Christ most?)

Loving obedience does not mean nervousness, worry and a state of anxiety. *But it does include a certain measure of concern for important things and for the Will of God*, even in details. This concern includes serious interest and diligent attention, heartfelt devotion, and the devotedness of real love. Since this concern is built on genuine love, it involves suffering, too. The hireling, who has no care, no concern, no interest, no spirit of sacrifice, no love—makes no sacrifice and escapes suffering, at least for the time being. Only too many times do we tell people not to worry, and they mistake us to mean, “to have no concern or interest”; then they learn to give up all serious interest and make their

greatest mistake. (Today we don't worry enough in the right way over the really important things.)

We must remember the *intense sadness of Christ* as He wept over the people of Jerusalem. Christ did not worry nor was He in a state of anxiety, because He in no way doubted Providence. He had, nevertheless, *a deep concern for the Father's Will* and for the immortal souls of men. He experienced a profound sorrow, when He saw the great tragedy of men defying God's Eternal Will and thus ruining their own souls. The hireling has no love, and so he feels no sadness at the loss of sheep; they are not his own; they are not dear to his heart. But Christ called Himself the Good Shepherd Who cares for His sheep; Who is so concerned about them and so interested in them that He lays down His Life for them. (The world needs more "lovers," in the good sense of the word.)

Christ in His Mystical Body, His Members, still suffers. Christ in superiors must continue to suffer as long as souls are in danger. Parents, nuns, priests, superiors, rulers—must suffer, and often be sad and deeply sorrowful, if they love their subjects and have any real concern for the souls under their charge. Superiors today, seeing their children surrounded by paganism, must be filled with sorrow. Christ in them cannot remain aloof and uninterested. Christ cried for souls—and thirsted for them too. *Love must always suffer!*

A real doctor must have serious concern for the patient he operates upon. A real lawyer must have serious interest in his client's case. A real policeman or fireman must give serious attention to the protection of the people. A real trainman must seriously regard the safety of his passengers. *Every real man and every real woman must have serious concern for the duties of his or her state in life.* Otherwise, they are not real men and not real women, but queer specimens of humanity.

It is evident then, that charity includes real concern and interest, even to the point of noble sacrifice. But this charity reaches a very high type of perfection, when a subject learns to obey even the unexpressed, but *anticipated desires of his*

superior. These desires can sometimes be learned from the habits, hints or past actions of the superior. Real ladies and real gentlemen have a keen insight into the wishes of others with whom they live; they are considerate of the likes and dislikes of others; they have a sensitivity to the needs of others.

Loving obedience is meant to produce *the bond of unity* in a society, community or home, because it *seeks the common good.* This is practical charity or charity in practice. *It is love's sweet service.*

PATIENCE—THE PERFECTION OF OBEDIENCE

Obedience includes order, discipline, arrangement, wise-planning; but it does not mean making men "machines or slaves." One should plan his day wisely, but without anxiety. Now if *unforeseen circumstances* arise, and they, too, are *part of the providential plan of God,* one can only be patient. Wise-planning means that one does not intend unnecessary interruptions. But if the Wisdom of God plans these same interruptions, then one must learn to obey as perfectly as possible.

Perfect obedience to even the smallest details of Providence is Patience. What God chooses is better than what I choose, and wiser, and safer. For example, I may be sent to pray when I would like to serve the sick; or I may be sent to serve the sick when I would like to pray. In either case, God's Will, reflected through my superior, is all-important. When I am willing to obey a particular rule or law, but circumstances make it impossible, then patience under these circumstances becomes "a more perfect obedience." (If God wants to make it impossible for me to keep a definite rule at this moment, what right have I to tell God that He is wrong?)

Scripture speaks of the patient man as "the perfect man." Patience is a genuine test of real perfection in holiness. The patience of the Church under persecution throughout history, is a remarkable test of the holiness of the Church. Christ in His Physical Body, gave us the perfect

example of patience. We, the members of the Church, which is the Mystical Christ, must also be patient to the Will of God in all things, even in adversity and actual persecution.

To be truly patient, one must abandon himself to God's Will. He must be convinced that God cares for him with a most tender and loving concern. At the same time, nevertheless, he must work, be vigilant and pray, lest he tempt God and quickly fall into sin. Patience does not mean that prudence is given up, nor labor, nor foresight, nor effort—but anxiety, worry and undue solicitude are given up. *Patience includes a strong belief in Divine Providence:* that the same God, Who cares for the birds and lilies of the field, cares even more for men, made as they are in the image and likeness of God. Patience includes such a confiding trust that it does not worry about tomorrow and its needs; its worries neither over the past nor for the future. Patience does not worry about being able to accomplish its duties, but relies on the grace of God to support its human weakness.

Patience is necessary day by day, because there is a daily cross at hand. St. Paul could say: "I die daily." Patience takes the daily cross of work or suffering and offers it with the Great Sacrifice of Christ on the Altar during Mass; and with all the Masses offered up throughout the world. *Patience is practical redemption on a small scale,* modeled on the redeeming-patience of Christ on the Cross. We are "other Christs," using our patience or perfect obedience to assist Christ in our own little way to redeem a modern, pagan world. (A glorious vocation for a real, zealous, obedient Christian.)

To be patient at all times, involves personal suffering. Gentlemen, ladies, and those who are hyper-sensitive—like Christ and Mary—always suffer very much. It is good to be sensitive to the Divine. It is good to be sensitive to human needs through sympathy. It is bad to be very sensitive to personal insult or injury to oneself. In the latter case, great patience must be exercised with others, and great patience must even be exercised with one's own faults and failings. (I believe all the saints had sensitive and affec-

tionate hearts; and I believe that their patience involved very deep suffering.)

Real gentlemen and ladies practice patience to a heroic degree. In so doing they lessen the amount of suffering for others, but they increase their own sufferings. When one tries to be Christ-like, others with lower ideals feel ill at ease in his presence. They will have to be met with patience, even when they are wrong. This selfsame patience, or perfect obedience to the smallest details of Providence, accomplishes more good and wins more souls, than much external work.

PEACE AND JOY—FRUITS OF OBEDIENCE

Since obedience is closely associated with simplicity and trust in Divine Providence, it is *a source of genuine joy and great peace*. This is not the false, empty joy nor the unreal peace of worldly pleasure, but the peace and joy of God, which no man can take from us. It is the deep realization of God's presence within us that excites this peaceful joy. The spirit of happiness comes from the Holy Spirit to a soul which embraces obedience.

Joy is a fruit of the Holy Ghost. It comes from the tree of Obedience and holiness. To have fruit, there must first be the tree. To get the fruit of joy, there must first be the tree of obedience. Obedience to the gifts of the Holy Ghost, brings this welcome fruit. Some people foolishly expect the fruit without the tree on which to grow it. Others look to the wrong tree for the right fruit. So many today enter their calling in life, aiming at the fruit of joy, without first having the tree of obedience and holiness. (Seek obedience and joy will follow.)

A happy-go-lucky disobedience to laws, to rules and to superiors, is *the wrong tree*; this tree never produces inner peace and happiness. It sours the fruit; it fills the fruit with the worm of discord and uncharitableness. (Loud laughing is usually the sign of inner lack of joy.)

The obedient person rejoices in the knowledge that he is carried around, each moment of the day, in the Strong Arms

of "Our Father." This is his secret joy, the reason for his radiant expression, the cause of his cheerful serenity and calmness. He has tasted the fruit of obedience and found it to be sweet Joy in the Lord. (Obedience makes us more cheerful but less worldly.)

Unhappiness often comes from being indefinite and undecided. It also comes from a failure to respect the details of Providence. Unhappiness often proceeds from a wrong use of one's liberty. Obedience sets these things in order and thus brings about real happiness.

Give us people trained to a life of obedience, and we will give to the world *a holiness that will attract others*. It will be a magnetic holiness drawing others to the charming personality of the human Christ. When people begin to know Christ as He really was, "they will become smiling saints; they will be holy, obedient people, living in a good, lovable, human way. They will be lovable and natural, possessing a beautiful simplicity. They will be human sunbeams with a great power for good. They will radiate Christ and be like Christ to others. These people will smile their way to heaven. Many others would be glad to embrace such a life of obedience and holiness, if they saw these Christ-like examples of genuine holiness. (We are at fault if we fail to present to the world the human Christ as well as the Divine.)

COURAGE—THE PROTECTION OF OBEDIENCE

When great obstacles arise, every virtue may crumble and crash, unless supported by a firm courage. Courage assists, supports, and encourages one to advance in obedience, despite difficulty, opposition, criticism, and even persecution.

Today we sorely need more Christian courage. We need real men and real women. We need men like the Manly Christ and women like the Real Woman, Mary. We are "fed up" with the hybrid varieties. We are disgusted with men who live more like women and with women who live more like men.

Christian courage gives one *a certain healthy, normal,*

spirit of independence—not of pride—but an independence built on the Christian nobility of sanctifying grace. It gives one the ability to withstand opposition, to live well even when criticized and laughed at, to be patient under petty or real persecution.

The big problem of our young people today is the fear of what others might say or think. They often have not the courage to live up to the ideals they love, in the face of criticism and sarcasm and bad example. Sarcasm is killing the spirit of many young people, who start out in life to do well but “just can’t take it.” We must teach them courage to fight manfully, yet calmly, against these fears. We must explain to them the meaning of the fighting sacrament of Confirmation and the courage it gives to be loyal soldiers of Jesus Christ.

To instill courage into our young people, let us hold up *two Mirrors for good living: Christ Crucified and Christ on the altar.* In these Mirrors we shall get the whole truth; we shall see what we are and what we should be. We shall see that we must be what Christ expects of us, even if all others do not approve, even if all the members of our house, or community disagree with us and scorn us. Christ was a Victim, too. (We do not here refer to superiors, who have a right to correct us.)

FAMILIAR KINDS OF OBEDIENCE

Obedience of Children to Parents

Children owe obedience to their parents as long as they are living under their parents’ care. If they leave their parents’ home to establish a home of their own, they no longer owe them real obedience, but they always owe them reverence and respect. Even after they have left home, they ought to give help to their parents when in need. “Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing to the Lord.”

It is a grave sin to strike a parent or even to attempt to strike one. “He who would strike father or mother, let him die the death.” It is a grave sin to curse a parent. “He

who curses father or mother, let him die the death." It is a grave sin, if through pride or contempt, we despise our parents who are poor or afflicted. The reason why these sins are often venial, instead of mortal, is because there is insufficient reflection or not full consent of the will. But children must be warned of the serious punishments, threatened by God in Holy Scripture, against those who are disobedient and disrespectful to their parents.

Today our educational system is at fault, because it puts too much stress on "self-expression" for children. Children are treated as grown-ups and spoiled by an excessive freedom. There is very little discipline and real character training. Religion is kept far in the background. There is no genuine training of the will. Too much time is spent on subjects which have no direct bearing on improving the character of the student. An increasing crime-wave among the young is the practical and logical conclusion. (The Catholic school should not be forced by the State to adopt the pagan, material viewpoint and excesses of the modern school systems.)

Parents can sin gravely by neglecting the religious, moral and physical education of their children. Today the great fault lies principally with the parents, who themselves often live carelessly and sinfully and so are not good examples of what they preach. Many are careless about the baptism of their children; about sending their children to Catholic schools; about sending them to religious instructions in cases where it is really impossible to send them to the Catholic school; about the companions of their children; about their reading habits; about the movies they attend; about the radio programs they listen to; about drinking habits and late hours; about discipline and order; about attending Mass and the Sacraments. (Christian parents, wake up, your children are surrounded by the real dangers of a world-wide paganism; build up a true Christian family, based on the principles of God; pray for and carefully watch over the children entrusted to you by God; maintain discipline. You will stand before God to render a strict account for the way in which you have guarded your children.)

Obedience of Wives to Husbands

In a real Christian home, the man is to be the head and the woman is to be the heart. The head is necessary to maintain order and unity; the heart is necessary to supply the love. Both are necessary and should co-operate to promote harmony. There should be mutual love and mutual help between the two partners in marriage. Each one must have a great trust in the other and each one ought to confide in the other.

It is a scandal at times to see really effeminate men, allowing women to completely run the home as the "head." It is a scandal when women begin to live and act like men, wearing men's clothes, smoking and drinking heavily. Christ wants a man to be the head of a home and a real man ought to see to it that his wife acts like a real woman and not like a man. And the man must not act like a woman, but with a kind firmness rule his own household. Many children would learn to live better lives, if they got better example from their parents. "Let women be subject to their husbands, as to the Lord: because the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is the head of the Church."

The family is the cradle of civil society. The state is made up of individual families. Give us better families and we shall have a better society. Let the fathers and mothers of families model their homes on the home of Nazareth; imitating Jesus, Mary and Joseph in a simple home-life. In practical terms, let each father dedicate his family to the Sacred Heart by a special act of consecration and let him encourage the members of his family to return to the beautiful practice of the Family Rosary.

Obedience to Rulers of States

Men owe obedience to their civil rulers and to just laws established by these rulers. Soldiers owe obedience to their army officers. "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's." If the rulers frame just laws for us, while they do not themselves practice what they preach, we must observe this principle

of Scripture: "All things whatsoever they shall say to you, observe and do—but according to their works, do ye not—for they say and do not."

The true Christian's first loyalty is to God and to His Church. This first loyalty helps to make him a better citizen of a State. "The Church approves of every one devoting his services to the common good, and doing all that he can for the defense, preservation, and prosperity of his country."

Civil power is limited by the laws of God. Where a law is simply unjust to ourselves, it may be obeyed. But where a law is intrinsically bad, we may not obey it. In such a case, we must in conscience "obey God rather than men." The early Christians were put to death, simply because they refused to obey civil laws which were contrary to the eternal laws of God.

We must disobey civil authority, even if it means death for us, when they ask us to do anything contrary to natural law or to the law of God. Legislators who pass laws against the doctrine and moral teachings of God, *e. g.*, favoring birth-control, abortion and mercy-killing, are going beyond their lawful powers. We must try to vote such men out of office at once.

Let Christians today take their right to vote more seriously than ever before, in view of the present paganism. With this power of the vote, we can see to it that the Gospel teachings pervade our laws. It is possible for us to commit sin, by allowing paganism to rule in government, when we can stop it or weaken it by our votes.

There is a peculiar difficulty for us in voting, since most of us do not know enough about the candidates. We ought to have some society, built on Christian principles, which would always supply us with all the necessary information about the different candidates. This could not be misinterpreted as a "forced vote." Rather are we bordering on the "forced vote," when we have such little true enlightenment on the lives of the candidates. Our liberty is now restricted, because most of us have not the time to make researches into the principles of the different men. And if the objection is raised that we can get their principles in

the newspapers, we reply that we have enough common sense to know that the newspapers are partial to special candidates, and many newspapers do not always print "the whole truth and nothing but the truth." Some Catholic leaders must help us, in the same way that we are advised about good and bad movies. We don't want to know the dirt in a man's private life exactly, but we do want to know the principles he preaches and the principles by which he regulates his life. We want the liberty that is our right, and not this system of "tossing up" for a choice between candidates, of whom we know nothing except the "good and bad points" as presented by political parties. Experience has proved that political parties are not always on the level. We expect to judge our men by the standards of Jesus Christ and by no other.

Catholic men in office, whoever they are; if they fail to uphold the principles of Christ through fear, through human respect, or through attachment to this world's goods, are a disgrace and a scandal. And there have been such. Catholic men in politics, and Catholic men in every walk of life, will meet a great wave of paganism and un-Christian ways of evaluation; they must fight this paganism, unafraid, even if it means the loss of a big job, or material wealth or human fame. They must learn to reinforce religion by their laws and discipline!

(Some marvelous signs of Christian manhood are in evidence. Take for example the Labor Schools and the Retreat Movements. The Church is rebuilding an educated, saintly, yet militant manhood today.)

Obedience of Catholics to the Church and Her Rulers

When we obey the Church, we not only obey an institution with 2,000 years human experience and history, but one divinely founded and always under divine guidance. When the Church speaks, Christ speaks. Who despises the Church, despises Christ. The Holy Ghost guides the Church infallibly and with eternal security. By faith, a reasonable submission of intellect and will is made to the true Church

of God. Obedience is due to the Pope, the Vicar of Christ on earth; to the Bishops, successors of the Apostles; and to the local priests of the parish. Obedience is also due to the teachers in the schools; the children must obey the nuns, Brothers and other teachers, who give them the teachings of Christ and His Church.

Obedience of Penitents to Confessors

Here we do not speak of obedience in the strict sense, but rather of a certain type of prudence. Today our people need spiritual direction, and must be able to get it. They are longing for it. Many want to rise above mediocrity and wish to aim high. God wills it! Let us have a spiritual crusade.

Every person needs help in his problems. To be able to get advice, is a safety valve for sanity and an insurance policy for sanctity. And no one can be a doctor in his own case, because he is too biased, too prejudiced, too subjective. A spiritual director is necessary to preserve balance, moderation and genuine piety, as well as to promote progress.

St. Teresa of Avila has something to say to those who wish to become contemplatives. She says they must submit their wills to a regular confessor. Then they will make more progress in one year than they would otherwise have done in many years. Besides, the penitent who obeys his confessor, cannot lose his soul. Even where a mistake is made, no lasting harm can come from obedience. Tragic results often come from disobedience or failure to prudently follow the advice of a confessor or spiritual director. Some people, for example the scrupulous type, will find their only cure in real obedience. (Let good Catholics pick out a regular confessor and director.)

Obedience of Men Directly to God

Worship is man's practical expression of obedience and self-surrender to God. Its highest expression is the Mass. The obligation to hear Mass on Sundays is an obedient rendering to God of the worship that is due to Him. Today

we are happy to see so many souls going beyond this obligation. They want to give more worship to God and so many of them attend Mass daily.

Our social and private prayer-life is an expression of this worship. Our "Morning Offering" consecrates each action and each suffering as an act of human worship to the Creator. In these practical ways we offer God an obedient and reasonable service.

We owe obedience to the Moral Laws of God and to His Natural Laws. We must also obey the Providence of God, even in the details of daily life, *e. g.*, the condition of the weather. God hides Himself behind secondary agents. We must make every effort to see His Hand in all these things and to accept them with an obedient spirit.

Obedience to one's vocation in life is also very important. When God inspires and attracts one to a certain vocation, the person must heed the call. So many vocations to religious life are lost by those attracted to the pleasures of this world, while fearful to "sell all, give to the poor, and follow Christ." Such people live in great danger. The parents of such youth are often to blame. Parents can sin seriously and be heavily punished, for trying to prevent a child from accepting God's invitation to religious life. God owns the children, and not the parents.

Men also owe obedience to the Voice of God reflected in their conscience. Generally a good conscience will advise one on what is good and what is evil. Where one knows that his conscience has been twisted by error, he is obliged to study the truths of Christ to correct his false ideas. A person, having sincerity and a well-instructed Catholic conscience, will have a very practical instrument for making correct judgments in the circumstances of daily life.

Obedience of Religious

Religious today need more spiritual direction from confessors or directors. Practical and personal direction would be a great aid to a more perfect obedience. If other means of direction are not available, religious should try to get

permission to write about once a month to a spiritual director, able and willing to help them. St. Francis de Sales kept up quite a correspondence with nuns and lay people, directing their souls through his spiritual letters. Let religious seek out one who is full of charity, wisdom and prudence.

Religious often find obstacles to obedience in "lack of privacy" and in "over-work." We ought to stress again a "back to the cell movement," with a greater chance for privacy, solitude and silent prayer. The religious who teach, should not be forced by State laws to meet many of the foolish requirements of education today; these teachers are often overworked with subjects which have no real value or utility in the light of eternity. Church leaders should militate for the passage of sane laws in education. The State has no right to make machines of the free servants of Christ. And religious do have the right to take some reasonable care of their spiritual lives. Some religious are doing too many material things, and are too busy, for their own spiritual good.

The Vow of Obedience is the most important thing in religious life. A fully obedient religious can in one year get more merit than one who seeks his personal austerities over a period of many years. By the vow of obedience the religious can in some measure, make up for the abuse of free will in others. Religious who wish to relax their obedience with the years, make a sad page in the history of the Church. As the years advance, our religious obedience should keep pace.

Religious must also obey Rules and Superiors. The vow of obedience demands the external fulfillment of the commands of a superior. The virtue of obedience goes further; it includes internal submission as well, and thus gives life or love to obedience. While ordinarily the disobedience of a religious to the rule of a superior is a venial sin, there are times when it can be mortal, *e. g.*, with contempt; with scandal to others.

Religious must observe the Counsels of Perfection. It is presumed that they are already aiming at keeping all the commandments. A religious who is content only to follow

the commandments, and not the counsels, is a religious in name only.

St. Teresa of Avila in her *Way of Perfection* says: "Obedience is of the greatest importance. I consider that she who is lacking in it is not a nun at all. I cannot understand what one is doing in a convent if, after she has made a vow of obedience, she does not fulfill it as perfectly as possible. At least I can assure her that if she fails in this she will never reach contemplation, or even lead the active life well: of this I am very certain."

St. Theresa of the Child Jesus in her *Autobiography* says: "O my God! from how much disquiet do we free ourselves by the vow of obedience. Happy is the simple religious: her one guide being the will of her superiors, she is ever sure of following the right path, and has no fear of being misled, even when it may appear her superiors are mistaken. But should she cease to consult the unerring compass, then at once her soul goes astray in barren wastes, where the waters of grace quickly fail."

The obedience of diocesan priests is an obedience promised to the Bishop. It includes the service of the diocese for which they are ordained. They may not leave the diocese, to work in another, without the Bishop's permission. This is a Promise—not a Vow—yet in practice it is almost equivalent to a vow of obedience.

(Give us religious who faithfully keep their rule and we have living saints.)

