

# Co-responsible Leadership



Obedience



Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary



## OBEDIENCE

### IV. THE WAY OF CONVERSION

- a. During the time of my personal reflection and community sharing on this theme, what calls have I received regarding my way of living obedience? How am I going to try to put them into practice?
- b. As a community, where do we feel we need to grow in obedience? What concrete steps can we take?

### I. INTRODUCTION

To speak of obedience implies first of all going beyond ourselves and standing before “the Other” in an attitude of welcoming the word directed to us. “Lord, what do you want of me?” is the radical question that arises when one is encountered, invited, convoked... and desires to answer with the total self-gift to God as did Jesus and Mary.

“How can we know the will of God?” With the Church throughout the ages religious life has put the accent on different mediations of the will of God. One mediation of which we are particularly sensitive at this time in the history of the Church, is the communal search for the will of God. The General Chapter of 2000 heard the desire for greater participation of all the sisters in making decisions concerning life and common mission that was expressed in the preparatory phase of the Chapter.

The logo for the process expresses among other things, the involvement of all in the search for a solution to feed 5000, following the directions of the Master, and letting ourselves be coordinated by Him.

It is hoped that the material in this booklet will foster discussion and a personal and community search on **how to understand and live obedience in our Congregation today**. Without a doubt this is an area in which we have made considerable progress in renewal over the past several years. Now is a good time to gather our experiences and express our ideas in order to further the process of refounding our religious life.

### II. CONTEMPLATE THE LIVED EXPERIENCE

#### A. Describe the lived experience

##### 1. Personal reflection

- a. How have I understood and lived obedience throughout my religious life? What is my experience of obedience now?

- b. How is obedience lived in my community?

## 2. Community sharing of personal experiences regarding obedience

### B. Analysis of the lived experience

#### 1. Personal reflection

- a. What has been most significant in this experience of obedience? Why?
- b. What difficulties have I encountered? What was the cause?
- c. What does this experience say to me today? What have I learned from it?

#### 2. Community sharing

- a. Share your personal reflections.
- b. What challenges does this present for the community?

### III. ENLIGHTENMENT

#### A. References

##### 1. The Word of God

###### Jn 5, 30

“I cannot do anything of myself. I judge as I hear, and my judgment is honest because I am not seeking my own will but the will of him who sent me.”

###### Mk 14, 36

“He kept saying, ‘*Abba* (O Father), you have the power to do all things. Take this cup away from me. But let it be as you would have it, not as I.’”

greater than the superior. In both cases the superior was placed outside the community, be it above or below. Today we have the ‘community-Jesus Christ’ model. Here the superior is the heart of the community, that is, the one who sees to it that the community pays attention to obedience to Jesus, whose food was to the will of his Father. Therefore, the superior is the one who has the mission to make this model productive and insure the responsibility of the whole community.

In this way the community becomes aware of being centered in Jesus Christ who called it and created it. The superior has the first responsibility of this task so that the centrality of Christ be taken into account and become the reason for being of the religious community.

Therefore, it is not a matter of submitting to the will and commands of the superior, but of doing the will of God, continuously sought in community discernment. The superior instigates this search. And this is how the primary reference is changed from the person of the superior to Jesus Christ as the only authority. Therefore, in her action, the superior does not act from her authority but from the authority of God, constantly sought in community searching, questioning, and discerning.

Seen in this way, obedience includes all. All, superiors and the whole community, we feel ourselves in obedience to the will of God. It is not a matter, therefore, that some command and others obey; we all obey, because all must listen to the will of God. This listening implies that all live deeply from the word of God.” s  
(PUJOL Y BARDOLET, J. El ministerio de animación comunitaria, San Pablo. Madrid 1998. p. 88-89)

#### B. Personal reflection

- What do these texts say to me?
- What questions arise in me?
- What concerns do they bring up?
- What lights did I receive?

is called and one by one responds, 'Present'. These biblical people have truly responded to the call of God. The Bible likes this sentence so much it even puts it in the mouth of inanimate creatures: "When he calls them (the stars), they answer, 'Here we are!' shining with joy for their maker." (Bar 3, 35). But for all the many times "Here I am" is seen in the Bible, there is one missing, and this absence has marked forever the destiny of humanity. When God called Adam after his sin, perhaps to forgive him, Adam, instead of responding 'Here I am' went and hid himself. (cf. Gn 3, 10). (CANTALAMESSA, Raniero. Obediencia. Valencia 2000. p. 74-75)

- **Christ's life was characterized by obedience**

"Following Christ and led by the grace of the Spirit, the religious has freely chosen the vow of obedience in response to a call from God. For the him/her, religious obedience is radically freeing. Religious obedience shows, also, that freedom is achieved precisely when there are bonds, connections. The example of Christ is clear, he became a servant and slave; he freely went to the cross, accepting the will of God. A free person is not one remains without a commitment or breaks those he has, but is one who binds him/herself more deeply, thus exercising freedom and remains faithful to his/her commitments.

"As for obedient servants, who identify themselves with 'the Obedient Servant,' what is specific to the religious is active availability, not dominating relationships."

"... There are times in which we are possessive, act like the owners of a mission, or of a work, or of a community, of goals and methods. What is specific to religious is to be sent: to be received from outside. Thus, to assume servanthood, to recognized oneself as the useless servant. (cf. Lk 17,10)." (URIBARRI, Gabino. Portar las marcas de Jesús. Comillas, Madrid 2001. p. 409)

- **Evolution of obedience**

"In these last four decades we have passed from a sense of obedience as 'superior-inferior', in which the superior was perceived as the instrument and the voice of God, to the 'superior-community' type which gave rise to two errors. For some, the superior was greater than the community and for others the community was

**Lk 1, 38**

"Mary said: 'I am the servant of the Lord. Let it be done to me as you say.'"

**Jn 2,5**

"Do whatever he tells you."

**Phil 2, 5-8**

"Your attitude must be that of Christ: Though he was in the form of God, he did not deem equality with God something to be grasped at. Rather, he emptied himself and took the form of a slave, being born in the likeness of men. He was known to be of human estate, and it was thus that he humbled himself, obediently accepting even death, death on a cross!"

**1Cor 12, 7**

"To each person the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good."

**Phil 2, 3-4**

"Never act out of rivalry or conceit; rather, let all parties think humbly of others as superior to themselves, each of you looking to others' interests rather than to his own."

## 2. Documents of the Church

- **Perfectae Caritatis**

"Religious obedience, far from lessening the dignity of the human person, by extending the freedom of the sons of God, leads it to maturity." (14)

- **Vita Consecrata**

"This testimony of consecration takes on special meaning in religious life because of the community dimension which marks it. The fraternal life is the privileged place in which to discern and accept God's will, and to walk together with one mind and heart. Obedience, enlivened by charity, unites the members of an institute in the same witness and the same mission, while respecting the

diversity of gifts and individual personalities. In community life which is inspired by the Holy Spirit, each individual engages in a fruitful dialogue with the others in order to discover the Father's will." (92)

- **Religious and Human Promotion**

"Four great loyalties constitute the basic motivation and guide of the role of religious in human promotion, according to the conciliar principles for renewal (PC #2) and taking into account the problems examined thus far:

- fidelity to humanity and to our times
  - fidelity to Christ and the Gospel
  - fidelity to the Church and to its mission in the world
  - fidelity to religious life and to the charism of one's own Institute."
- (13)

### 3. Congregational Documents

- **The Good Mother...**

"My God , here I am, do with me as you wish."

"Don't do anything, however small, ... without recollecting yourself a little. May the Spirit of God work in you in a way that you do not act except through Him." F. TROCHU, (*La Servante de Dieu, Henriette Aymer de la Chevalerie*, p. 162)

"My good sister, please be convinced of my sincerity and of the desire that I have that the gentle but strong bond which unites us be strengthened and that with one accord, we correspond fully to the will of God for us. Pray, my good sister, that He will give us the grace for our position; for you the choicest graces: for me, perseverance in a state where all is dead to nature, self-sacrifice, desire for suffering, or rather, need for suffering; in short, perseverance in a state where one's life should be but a constant holocaust of ones whole being to God and to God alone. (H. LUCAS, *La Bonne Mère, sa vie*, Policopias, Picpus, p. 71)

- **The Good Father...**

"Pray that the holy will of God be done, and if he wishes, he will show the way." (A Isidore David , 22.01.1808)

"The times are so variable. We will have a lot of suffering waiting for better times to arrive. The Will of God in all things and for all.(A Ludovine, 29.11.1808)

"Rejoice, rejoice in God during the journey of life. He alone is good, His will alone is good.... I know that all things are nothing, except to love God. Let us live only for Him, and die with the desire of pleasing Him; this is true happiness." (A G. de la Barre, 06.06.1809)

- **Constitutions**

"By his filial obedience, Jesus gave himself completely to the service of God's saving plan, even to death on the Cross. At the Annunciation, Mary by her "yes," inaugurated the reparative mission of her Son and fully united herself to it." (31)

"With the obedient Christ and following the example of Mary, each one of us adheres in faith to the Father's will and freely places herself at the service of the Congregation's mission in the Church. By the vow of obedience, we commit ourselves to obey the decisions of legitimate Superiors in all they prescribe according to the Constitutions.

In virtue of the vow of obedience all members of the Congregation obey the Holy Father as their highest superior (Can 590.2)." (32)

### 4. A Contemporary Vision of Obedience

- **"Here I Am, O God. . ."**

"This sentence which is among the shortest and simplest in human language, and among the dearest to God is repeated often throughout the Bible. It expresses the mystery of obedience to God. Abraham said: 'Here I am' (Gn 22,1); Moses said: 'Here I am' (Ex 3, 4). Samuel said: 'Here I am' (1Sm 3, 1ff); Isaiah said: 'Here I am' (Is 6, 8); Mary said: 'Here I am' (Lk 1, 38); Jesus said: 'Here I am' (Hb 10, 9). It sounds like we are at a convocation where each person