

16. February 2026
REFLECTION ON OBEDIENCE
“A royal path to follow Christ”

After having devoted two previous meditations to reflecting on the evangelical counsel of chastity, today I would like to address some general aspects of spiritual obedience, which is so important for all of us in imitating Christ. I hope that this reflection will help us appreciate spiritual obedience a little more.

The Latin word *oboedire*, from which “to obey” is derived, includes the verb *audire*, which means “to listen.” Therefore, obedience is related to attentive listening—that is, to hearing correctly and giving our full attention to the One who is speaking to us.

When God communicated His commandments to the People of Israel through Moses, He began by saying: “*Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord*” (Dt 6:4).

And through the prophet Isaiah He exhorts us: “*Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live*” (Is 55:3).

Human beings do not possess the deepest wisdom within themselves. On the contrary, without God’s help, they would not even be able to reach the goal of their lives. They need God’s guidance and direction; they need the Holy Spirit to recognize God as He truly is. They receive all these indispensable guidelines primarily by listening to God in the many ways He speaks to them.

Proper listening does not consist of hearing superficially and extracting only what pleases our ears while ignoring everything else. It is precisely this attitude that God laments again and again in Sacred Scripture: the deafness of His people. In this case, the listener’s will is not oriented toward what is right or toward the truth. He does not want to listen; he does not incline his ear toward wisdom, and therefore he does not come to understanding.

In fact, this reaches such a point that St. Paul is forced to warn: “*For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own likings, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander into myths*” (2 Tim 4:3–4).

How different are the wise words with which St. Benedict begins his Rule:

“Listen, my son, to your master’s precepts, and incline the ear of your heart. Receive willingly and carry out effectively your loving father’s advice, that by the labor of obedience you may return to Him from whom you had departed by the sloth of disobedience.”

Why does the path of obedience seem so arduous and is often even rejected?

Often this aversion is based on a misconception and, more specifically, on a false image of God. Obedience is seen as a restriction of personal freedom. This mistaken view of freedom seems to give us the right to withdraw from God’s loving will. Moreover, God’s will can even seem like a threat to be avoided. This misconception is accompanied by that distorted image of God that was already transmitted to us in the temptation in Paradise.

However, when we discover God as He truly is—that is, as our loving Father—then the doors open to truly wanting to know His will and put it into practice. Fear and false reverence disappear, for they do not correspond to the relationship of love to which our Father invites us: to live as His children, trusting Him completely.

Thus, the concept of obedience also changes. Without neglecting the simple obligation to obey God’s precepts unconditionally, obedience acquires “spiritual wings.” Let us imagine the holy angels, who gladly obey each of His commands.

Obedience becomes a constant quest to live in complete harmony with our Father, making His intentions for us and for the whole world our own. It is a sincere attempt to be in complete conformity with truth and love. Thus, obedience becomes a matter of the heart, and God’s will becomes the food of which Jesus speaks: *“My food is to do the will of him who sent me”* (Jn 4:34).

Far from restricting personal freedom, obedience brings about exactly the opposite. In fact, the joyful fulfillment of God’s will guarantees human freedom. It breaks the chains of disordered self-love and attachment to one’s own will, to the world, and to people.

Obedience makes the path of following Christ more agile and allows the Holy Spirit to work more freely and more fruitfully in the person. When obedience is not limited to fulfilling the “general” will of God, as expressed in the commandments and norms of the Church, but seeks to recognize it more and more precisely in each concrete situation of life, then it leads to growing spiritual vigilance.

As obedience grows and matures, it becomes easier for us to recognize and fulfill God's will. Therefore, it becomes a royal path to follow Christ.

Meditation on the day's reading: <https://en.elijamission.net/resisting-doubt/>