



20. March 2024

LENTEN ITINERARY

Day 36: "The splendour of obedience"

In yesterday's meditation we highlighted the obedience of St. Joseph, who promptly complied with God's Will, as soon as he had recognised it. His attitude invites us to reflect more generally on the virtue of obedience, which is a great good when properly understood and practised.

Obedience is related to listening, paying attention, hearing, heeding....

When God addresses His people through Moses, He begins by exhorting them to listen: *"Listen, Israel: the Lord our God is the one, the only Lord"* (Dt 6:4).

Human beings cannot draw the deepest wisdom from themselves, nor are they capable of reaching their life's goal without God's help. We need God's guidance and orientation; we need the Holy Spirit in order to know God as He really is.

True listening to the Lord is not just a superficial listening, which only hears what pleases us and ignores everything else. Again and again we hear in Sacred Scripture how God laments the deafness of His people. The will of the hearer is not oriented towards what is right: they do not want to listen, they do not incline their ears and therefore do not understand (cf. Prov 2:1-4).

St. Paul warns us that there will come a time when people will not want to listen to sound doctrine, but only to what pleases their ears, i.e. what pleases them (cf. 2 Tim 4,3).

Often this attitude is based on a wrong conception or, better still, a wrong image of God. Obedience is seen as a restriction of personal freedom. This false notion of freedom seems to give us the right to withdraw from God's loving will, and His will can even be seen as a threat to be shunned.

This distorted image of God presents Him to us as a kind of tyrant, who arbitrarily gives

His orders, so that we have no choice but to obey them slavishly. But the reality is quite the opposite!

The right image of God, seeing Him as our loving Father, opens the way for us to really want to know what His will is and to put it into practice. Then it will no longer remain just an act of formal obedience, which we feel inwardly obliged to do, because we know that we have to keep His commandments. Certainly this formal obedience is also praiseworthy and absolutely necessary in order not to lose our way. It is also an expression of love for God, as the Lord Himself tells us: "*Whoever holds to my commandments and keeps them is the one who loves me*" (Jn 14:21).

However, our obedience to God can take on a much greater splendour when it consists in the sincere pursuit of living according to our Father's will even in the smallest details. Here one becomes immersed in God's plan for us and the whole of humanity. In this way, obedience becomes a great matter of the heart and the Will of God becomes that nourishment on which Jesus nourished Himself. One begins to long for this nourishment and any false fear of God vanishes.

We see, then, that obedience in no way restricts our personal freedom - quite the contrary! The joyful fulfilment of God's Will guarantees human freedom, loosening the chains of self-attachment, the imprisonment in one's own "I", the disordered attachment to the world and to people... The fulfilment of God's Will brings us into His world.

Let us pause for a moment to think how obedience will be practised in eternity. It will have in fullness that splendour which we can already glimpse now when we joyfully fulfil God's Will. It will be the expression of the reverent love of all those who are gathered around the Throne of God and enjoy His Presence. All will be united in this holy obedience, ever and naturally attentive to the slightest desire of their loving Heavenly Father.

Obedience gives agility to the path of following Christ, and enables the Spirit of God to do more and more of His work in the soul. It is precisely this obedience that leads to an attitude of great spiritual vigilance, for it does not only remain a formal fulfilment of God's will on a general level, but seeks and recognises it ever more finely in the concrete situation of life.

Obedience, which grows and matures more and more, makes it easy for us to discover and do God's Will. Thus, it becomes a royal path in the following of Christ.

Meditation on the reading of the day: <http://en.elijamission.net/2022/04/06/>

Meditation on the Gospel of the day: <http://en.elijamission.net/2021/03/24/>