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Retreat for Bishops, “Renewing and Strengthening the Resolve”
Shellbourne Conference Center
Valparaiso, Indiana
March 6-10, 2017

Render Obedience Faithfully

- “Do you resolve to render obedience faithfully to the successor of the blessed Apostle Peter?”
 - Living in an age in which freedom is interpreted to be the ability to choose and do whatever one wants rather than what one ought, in accordance with the truth about ourselves, others, the world and God, obedience is a particularly challenging virtue, resolution, promise and vow. As Archbishop Sheen said last night in the audio at dinner, it’s definitely “out.” It’s hard for us to give. It’s hard for those who need to give it to us.
 - The first sin of Adam and Eve, as we pondered on Sunday, was a sin of disobedience to God, one that began with the devil’s provoking a lack of trust in the one being obeyed. So Pope Benedict would write in *Verbum Domini* that the devil continues to insinuate among us the spirituality of obedience so that we might echo in our own lives his primordial “non serviam!” “The word of God inevitably reveals the tragic possibility that human freedom can withdraw from this covenant dialogue with God for which we were created,” Pope Benedict writes. “The divine word also discloses the sin that lurks in the human heart. Quite frequently in both the Old and in the New Testament, we find sin described as a *refusal to hear the word*, as a breaking of the covenant and thus as being closed to God who calls us to communion with himself. Sacred Scripture shows how *man’s sin is essentially disobedience and refusal to hear*. The radical obedience of Jesus even to his death on the cross (cf. Phil 2:8) completely unmasks this sin. His obedience brings about the New Covenant between God and man, and grants us the possibility of reconciliation. ... For this reason *it is important that the faithful be taught to acknowledge that the root of sin lies in the refusal to hear the word of the Lord, and to accept in Jesus, the Word of God, the forgiveness which opens us to salvation.*”
 - In contrast to this spirituality of disobedience, Pope Benedict proposes the obedience of faith, which is a spirituality of hearing the word and accepting Jesus’ mercy. “VD 25. “The obedience of faith’ (Rom 16:26; cf. Rom 1:5; 2 Cor 10:5-6) must be our response to God who reveals. By faith one freely commits oneself entirely to God. ... The proper human response to the God who speaks is faith. ... Faith thus takes shape as an encounter with a person to whom we entrust our whole life.” The model for this type of obedience of faith is, Pope Benedict says, Our Lady. She is the one “in whom the interplay between the word of God and faith [is] brought to perfection, ... who by her ‘yes’ to the word of the covenant and her mission, perfectly fulfills the divine vocation of humanity. ... Her obedient faith shapes her life at every moment before God’s plan. A Virgin ever attentive to God’s word, she lives completely attuned to that word; she treasures in her heart the events of her Son, piecing them together as if in a single mosaic (cf. Lk 2:19,51).”
 - There’s clearly a need for a deeper, lived spirituality of obedience that we see in Mary and in the saints. That’s a necessity among the people of God in general. But there’s a particular need to see it displayed in an exemplary way by the successors of the apostles, the spiritual heirs of the ones to whom Jesus first said, “Follow me,” “Do this in memory of me,” “I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do,” and “Go and do the same”; by the ones whom he first taught to pray to the Father, “Thy will be done,” three of whom he allowed to overhear his own plea to the Father, “Take this chalice from me, but not my will, but thine be done.”; by the ones whom he sought so to attune to his voice, mind and heart that he could send them out saying, “Whoever listens to you listens to me.”
 - Archbishop Sheen framed this obedience in particularly simple terms last night at dinner when he said that Bishops and Priests are “Ambassadors of Christ,” and for that reason they are men under obedience. That insight has become even clearer for me working with the Apostolic Nuncio to the United Nations and interacting with so many Ambassadors representing their country. They are

there with a message from the one who sent them. Most everything done of any importance needs to be checked with “capital,” or in our case, with the Second Section of the Secretary of State for Relations with States and with the Holy Father.

- The spirituality of obedience.
 - Our approach to God and his words.
 - One of the great illustrations of this is in the Book of Nehemiah, Chapter 8, which the Church ponders on the Third Sunday of Ordinary Time, Year C, focused on the time after the exile.
 - Now when the seventh month came, the whole people gathered as one man in the open space before the Water Gate, and they called upon Ezra the scribe to bring forth the book of the law of Moses which the LORD prescribed for Israel. On the first day of the seventh month, therefore, Ezra the priest brought the law before the assembly, which consisted of men, women, and those children old enough to understand. Standing at one end of the open place that was before the Water Gate, he read out of the book from daybreak till midday... and all the people listened attentively to the book of the law. Ezra the scribe stood on a wooden platform that had been made for the occasion; he opened the scroll so that all the people might see it (for he was standing higher up than any of the people); and, as he opened it, all the people rose. Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God, and all the people, their hands raised high, answered, “Amen, amen!” Then they bowed down and prostrated themselves before the LORD, their faces to the ground. ... Ezra read plainly from the book of the law of God, interpreting it so that all could understand what was read. Then [Nehemiah and] Ezra the priest-scribe said to all the people: “Today is holy to the LORD your God. Do not be sad, and do not weep” — for all the people were weeping as they heard the words of the law. He said further: “Go, eat rich foods and drink sweet drinks, and allot portions to those who had nothing prepared; for today is holy to our LORD. Do not be saddened this day, for rejoicing in the LORD must be your strength!” ... On the second day, the family heads of the whole people and also the priests and the Levites gathered around Ezra the scribe and examined the words of the law more closely. ... Now the Israelites had done nothing of this sort from the days of Jeshua, son of Nun, until this occasion; therefore there was very great joy. Ezra read from the book of the law of God day after day, from the first day to the last. They kept the feast for seven days, and the solemn assembly on the eighth day, as was required.
 - Cardinal Ravasi, in the retreat given to Pope Benedict and the Roman Curia four years ago, right before his renunciation, gave a beautiful commentary on what our response in obedience needs to be to God’s word. We see it here:
 - The first was *reading*. Ezra and the scribes read plainly from God’s word in discrete passages, like points of meditation. The word “read” in Hebrew means to “proclaim” since reading Sacred Scripture was always done aloud. It also means, “translate,” because many of the post-exilic Jews were rusty in Hebrew. It points to the connection between reading and proclaiming, making it intelligible to the minds and lives of those hearing. The first step is to let God speak.
 - The second aspect was *interpreting*, or *explaining* the word of God. As the scribes read, they helped the people to grasp some of the applications. There are often many meanings to God’s word. The Catechism of the Catholic Church describes three different types of spiritual meanings, one linked to Jesus, another to ourselves and our response in faith, and a third to heaven and to our vocation to be saints. When we ponder and proclaim the word of God, when we listen to and read it, this aspect of explaining it is very important if we’re ever going to reach the third stage.
 - The third stage was *understanding* the Word of God. This is far more than an

intellectual grasp of the material, but the Hebrew word means that there's a knowledge at the level of one's entire personality and that it impacts us at the level of our whole being. The Latin translation for this understanding *sapientia*, which is normally understood as wisdom, but its literal translation is to taste. When we understand the Word of God, we taste it, it delights us, it becomes part of us as we become what we eat, although, as Ezechiel himself experienced when God had him eat the scroll of the Word of God, sometimes this digestion of God's word can seem bitter because it leads to the crucifixion of our old way of being.

- These three stages are all basically the first movement of the Word of God as we seek to grasp at the level of our being what God is saying to us. It's like the liturgy of the Word when God's word is proclaimed through the readings and then interpreted and helped to be comprehended in the homily. The next four stages involve our response to what has been announced, explained and comprehended.
- The fourth stage is *listening to the Word of God*. "All the people listened attentively to the book of the law," Nehemiah tells us. The Jewish people are basically formed out of the command to listen. The famous Schema they pray each day reminds them of Moses' words, "Hear, O Israel, that the Lord your God is God alone." To listen means something different than merely absorbing the Word through our ears, as if it were just a form of auditory reading. Rather, in Hebrew there's no distinction between hearing and obeying. It's the same word, *Shema*. To listen to the Word of God is to listen to it as a word to be done, as an imperative once understood. In Latin, we keep the connection between hearing (*audire*) and obeying (*ob-audire*) — to listen "toward" or "in the way of," or simply to eavesdrop — which means a listening so attentive we're hanging on every word. Obedience is to listen as words to be done. St. James calls us not to be merely idle listeners but "doers" of the Word. We're called to say like Mary, who was praised by Jesus for hearing the Word of God and doing it, "Let it be done to me according to your Word." To be a member of Jesus' family, Jesus said elsewhere, we must do the will of the Father in heaven. This is the type of attentive listening to the Word that is being described here. Listening in order to act.
- The fifth stage is *converting*. "Do not be sad, and do not weep," the people are told, because they were all weeping as they heard the words of the law. St. James says the Word of God is like a mirror, and when they looked at the Mirror of God's word, they saw who they were supposed to be and who they in fact were and it brought them to tears. They bowed down and prostrated themselves before the Lord, their faces to the ground. Likewise, the Word of God is meant to bring us to conversion, to change our ways, so that we may conform ourselves to what God is telling us through his Word.
- The sixth stage is *responding to the word of God with acts of charity*. The text tells us that "all the people raised their hands high, saying 'Amen. Amen'" and immediately began to allot portions of food and drink to those who didn't have any "because they understood the words that had been expounded to them." The real impact of the Word of God is that it's supposed to help us to love others as God has loved us. It's a word of love. Hearing the word of God must change our life. There's an existential commitment that God seeks when he speaks. Cardinal Giancarlo Ravasi said memorably, "*Non basta il culto senza la vita. Non basta la liturgia senza la giustizia. Non basta la preghiera senza l'impegno esistenziale.*" Loosely translated this means that our worship is supposed to change our life, our liturgy is supposed to inspire us to justice, and our prayer is supposed to lead to the fruit of a total commitment of our life. That's what we see happened with the Jews who "understood" the words of the

Lord: it spurred them to charity. That's what is supposed to occur for us.

- The seventh and last stage is celebrating. There was a great feast. "Go, eat rich foods and drink sweet drinks," they were told, "for today is holy to our Lord. Do not be saddened this day, for rejoicing in the Lord must be your strength!" The Word of God is meant to fill us with joy and lead us to celebrate that joy with others, sharing our joy, our food, our drink, our lives with others. Rejoicing is supposed to be our great strength as believers and that joy flows from the total transformation the Word of God does in us. "The precepts of the Lord give joy to the heart," as we pray often in the Responsorial Psalm. The law of the Lord, we say, is perfect, refreshing, trustworthy, wise, right, joy-filled, clear, illuminating, pure, enduring forever, true, just. And so there's every reason to celebrate! There's obviously an allusion to the Eucharistic feast here, when, after having heard the Word of God, we eat the most unbelievable food ever and drink the choicest liquid. The Liturgy of the Word is interconnected with and leads to the Liturgy of the Eucharist. And the Liturgy of the Eucharist is meant to lead to the Liturgy of Life. It's supposed to lead to agape, which is the overflowing, loving, joyful communion that comes from the liturgical celebration, as we "do this in memory of Christ" and seek to give ourselves and our lives to save others and lift them up.
 - And so we see that to receive the Word of God with faith we must first have it read, explained, and understood and then listen and obey it, convert in response to it, act with charity and celebrate it. That's the spirituality of obedience to the word.
- Our prayer
 - Prayer is ultimately to make our own the words of the young Samuel, "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening." We listen as a servant prompt to obey what we hear.
 - Our moral life in imitation of Christ.
 - A bishop's or a priest's obedience is ground in Christ's obedience.
 - In calling us to be obedient, therefore, Jesus is not saying merely "Do what I say," but rather "Follow me." Because of the centrality of obedience in the life of Jesus, it also needs to be central in the life of those who believe in him. *Faciem Tuam, Domine, Required*, 2008 document by the Vatican's Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, said, "The Christian, like Christ, is defined as an obedient being. The unquestionable primacy of love in Christian life cannot make us forget that such love has acquired a face and a name in Christ Jesus and has become Obedience. Therefore, obedience is not humiliation but the truth on which the fullness of human persons is built and realized. Hence, the believer so ardently desires to fulfill the will of the Father as to make of it his or her supreme aspiration. Like Jesus, he or she wants to live by this will."
 - To want to live by the will of the Father is the essence of the Christian life. It is "the distinctive characteristic" of the New Covenant which Jesus himself established, and therefore must distinguish us who seek to live by that Covenant. It is the path of the exodus of personal liberation from self-idolatry.
 - Just as with that first exodus when God made known his will through the human mediation of Moses, so in the New Covenant God makes it known through the human mediation of his Church, and in particular, through Peter and his successors. "The task of following the Lord cannot be taken by solitary navigators," the instruction asserts, "but is accomplished in the bark of Peter, which survives the storms.... Our obedience is a believing with the Church, a thinking and speaking with the Church, serving through her. What Jesus predicted to Peter also always applies: 'You will be taken where you do not want to go'. This letting oneself be guided where one does not want to be led is an essential element of our serving and precisely that which makes us free."

- St. John Paul II said in *Pastores Gregis*:
 - PG 18. The life of the Bishop must radiate the life of Christ and consequently Christ's own obedience to the Father, even unto death, death on a Cross (cf. Phil 2:8),
 - PG 19. [In] all that he says and does, [the bishop] will reflect a common filial submission in Christ and in the Spirit to the loving plan of the Father. As a teacher of holiness and minister of the sanctification of his people, the Bishop is called to carry out faithfully the will of the Father. The Bishop's obedience must be lived according to the example – for it could hardly be otherwise – of the obedience of Christ himself, who said that he came down from heaven not to do his own will, but rather the will of the One who sent him (cf. Jn 6:38; 8:29; Phil 2:7-8). Walking in the footsteps of Christ, the Bishop is obedient to the Gospel and the Church's Tradition; he is able to read the signs of the times and to recognize the voice of the Holy Spirit in the Petrine ministry and in episcopal collegiality. ... The Bishop is called to live out his obedience by overcoming all temptations to individualism and by taking upon himself, within the wider context of the mission of the College of Bishops, concern for the good of the whole Church. As a model of attentive listening, the Bishop will also strive to understand, through prayer and discernment, the will of God in what the Spirit is saying to the Church. Through the evangelical exercise of his authority, he will be ready to dialogue with his co-workers and the faithful in order to build effective mutual understanding. ... The faithful should be helped to grow towards a responsible obedience which will enable them to be actively engaged on the pastoral plane. Here the exhortation which Saint Ignatius of Antioch addressed to Polycarp remains timely: "Let nothing be done without your consent, but do nothing yourself without the consent of God".
- Apostolorum Successores, *The Directory for the Pastoral Life of Bishops*, adds:
 - AS 14. As a consequence of his episcopal ordination, of hierarchical communion and of his membership in the episcopal College, the Bishop should prize highly and nourish in his heart that communion of charity and obedience which binds him to the Roman Pontiff, making his own the Holy Father's intentions, initiatives, joys and concerns, and fostering also within the faithful those same filial sentiments.
 - [There are, of course, very few things that the Successor of St. Peter will ever ask a bishop to do under holy obedience, except for the rarest of disciplinary cases. He will almost always propose. But the Directory is saying that the virtue of obedience reigns when the resolution or promise of obedience doesn't *stricte dicta* bind.]
 - AS 43. *Obedience to the Will of God*. Christ, who became "obedient unto death, even death on a cross" (*Phil* 2:8), whose food is to do the will of the Father (cf. *Jn* 4:34), is ever present before the eyes of the Bishop as the supreme example of that obedience which was the cause of our justification (cf. *Rom* 5:19). Conforming himself to Christ, the Bishop offers an outstanding service to unity and to ecclesial communion: his conduct demonstrates that no one in the Church may legitimately command others if he does not first offer himself as an example of obedience to the Word of God and to the authority of the Church.
- Obedience battles against the pride of life
 - VC 91. (The challenge of freedom in obedience) The <third challenge> comes from those <notions of freedom> which separate this fundamental human good from its essential relationship to the truth and to moral norms.[227] In effect, the promotion of freedom is a genuine value closely connected with respect for the human person. But who does not see the aberrant consequences of injustice and even violence in the life of individuals and of peoples to which the distorted use of freedom leads? An effective <response> to this situation is the <obedience which marks the consecrated life>. In an especially vigorous way this obedience repropose the obedience of Christ to the Father and, taking this mystery as

its point of departure, testifies that there is <no contradiction between obedience and freedom>. Indeed, the Son's attitude discloses the mystery of human freedom as the path of obedience to the Father's will and the mystery of obedience as the path to the gradual conquest of true freedom. It is precisely this mystery which consecrated persons wish to acknowledge by this particular vow. By obedience they intend to show their awareness of being children of the Father, as a result of which they wish to take the Father's will as their daily bread (cf. Jn. 4:34), as their rock, their joy, their shield and their fortress (cf. Ps. 18:2). Thus they show that they are growing in the full truth about themselves, remaining in touch with the source of their existence and therefore offering this most consoling message: "The lovers of your law have great peace; they never stumble" (Ps. 118:165).

- It brings us to the essence of the redemption.
 - RD 13. Christ, "though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross." Here, in these words of the letter of St. Paul to the Philippians, we touch the very essence of the Redemption. In this reality is inscribed in a primary and constitutive way the obedience of Jesus Christ. Other words of the Apostle, taken this time from the letter to the Romans, confirm this: "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience many will be made righteous." The evangelical counsel of obedience is the call which derives from this obedience of Christ "unto death." Those who accept this call, expressed by the words "Follow me," decide as the Council says--to follow Christ "who, by an obedience which carried Him even to death on the cross, redeemed humanity and made it holy." By living out the evangelical counsel of obedience, they reach the deep essence of the entire economy of the Redemption. By fulfilling this counsel they desire to gain a special sharing in the obedience of that "one alone" by whose obedience all "will be made righteous." It can therefore be said that those who decide to live according to the counsel of obedience are placed in a unique way between the mystery of sin and the mystery of justification and salvific grace. They are in this "place" with all the sinful background of their own human nature, with all the inheritance "of the pride of life," with all the selfish tendencies to dominate rather than to serve, and precisely by means of the vow of obedience they decide to be transformed into the likeness of Christ, who "redeemed humanity and made it holy by his obedience." In the counsel of obedience they desire to find their own role in the Redemption of Christ and their own way of sanctification. This is the way which Christ marked out in the Gospel, speaking many times of fulfilling the will of God, of ceaselessly searching for it. "My food is to do the will of him who sent me, and to accomplish his work." "Because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me." "He who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what is pleasing to him." "For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me." This constant fulfilling of the will of the Father also reminds us of that messianic confession of the psalmist in the Old Testament: "Behold, I come; in the written scroll it is prescribed for me. To do your will, O my God, is my delight, and your law is within my heart." This obedience of the Son--full of joy--reaches its zenith in the face of the passion and cross: "Father, if it is your will, take this cup from me; yet not my will but yours be done." From the prayer in Gethsemane onwards, Christ's readiness to do the will of the Father is filled to the very brim of suffering, becoming that obedience "unto death, even death on a cross" spoken of by St. Paul. Through the vow of obedience consecrated persons decide to imitate with humility the obedience of the Redeemer in a special way. For although submission to the will of God and obedience to His law are for every state a condition of Christian life, nevertheless, in the "religious state," in the "state of perfection," the vow of obedience establishes in the heart of each of you, dear brothers and sisters, the duty of a particular reference to Christ "obedient unto death." And since this obedience of Christ constitutes the essential nucleus of the work of the Redemption, as is seen from the words

of the Apostle quoted above, therefore, also in the fulfilling of the evangelical counsel of obedience we must discern a particular moment in that "economy of the Redemption" which pervades your whole vocation in the Church. From this derives that "total availability to the Holy Spirit" who is at work above all in the Church. ... Hand in hand with submission-obedience thus conceived goes the attitude of service which animates your whole life after the example of the Son of Man, who "came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. And His Mother, at the decisive moment of the Annunciation-Incarnation, entering from the very beginning into the whole salvific economy of the Redemption, said: "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." Remember also, dear brothers and sisters, that the obedience to which you committed yourselves by consecrating yourselves without reserve to God through the profession of the evangelical counsels is a particular expression of interior freedom, just as the definitive expression of Christ's freedom was His obedience "unto death": "I lay down my life, that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord."

- It must be part of a spirit of asceticism
 - PDV 28. This aspect of the priest's obedience demands a marked spirit of asceticism, both in the sense of a tendency not to become too bound up in one's own preferences or points of view, and in the sense of giving brother priests the opportunity to make good use of their talents and abilities, setting aside all forms of jealousy, envy and rivalry. Priestly obedience should be one of solidarity, based on belonging to a single presbyterate. Within the presbyterate, this obedience is expressed in co-responsibility regarding directions to be taken and choices to be made. Finally, priestly obedience has a particular <"pastoral" character.> It is lived in an atmosphere of constant readiness to allow oneself to be taken up, as it were "consumed", by the needs and demands of the flock. These last ought to be truly reasonable and at times they need to be evaluated and tested to see how genuine they are. But it is undeniable that the priest's life is fully "taken up" by the hunger for the Gospel and for faith, hope and love for God and his mystery, a hunger which is more or less consciously present in the People of God entrusted to him.
- It is trained through suffering
 - "Son though He was, Jesus learned obedience through suffering," as the Epistle to the Hebrews reminds us. And so will we.
- Our "double-listening" in the we receive obedience.
- AS 119. The Bishop is called, therefore, to meditate upon the Word of God and to devote himself generously to this ministry (cf. Acts 6:4), so that everyone can render obedience not to the word of men, but to God, the source of revelation. He ought to teach clerics that the proclamation of the Word of God is an essential task for any pastor of souls (354).
- AS 76. In exercising his ministry, the Bishop relates to his priests not merely as a ruler towards his subjects, but rather as a father and a friend. He should devote himself wholeheartedly to creating a climate of affection and trust such that his priests may respond with a convinced, pleasing and firm obedience. The practice of obedience is strengthened rather than weakened if the Bishop, as far as possible and without prejudice to justice and charity, explains to the interested parties the reasons for his decisions. He should show equal care and attention to every priest, because all of them, while their gifts will be many and varied, are engaged in the service of the Lord as members of a single presbyterate. The Bishop should encourage a spirit of initiative among his priests, avoiding anything that might lead them to understand obedience in a passive and irresponsible manner. He should ensure that each gives his best and does so generously, placing his own capacities in the service of God and of the Church, with the mature freedom of the sons of God.
- Double-listening
 - PG 47. Each Diocesan Bishop has as one of his primary duties the spiritual care of his presbyterate: "The action of the priest who places his hands in the hands of the Bishop on the day of his priestly ordination, as he professes to him 'filial respect and obedience', can at first sight seem a one-way

gesture. In reality, the gesture commits them both: priest and Bishop. The young presbyter chooses to entrust himself to the Bishop and the Bishop for his part obliges himself to look after those hands"

- This, of course, puts a great correlative burden on those in authority to show that
- FTDR (2008): Persons called to exercise authority must know that they will be able to do so only if they first undertake the pilgrimage that leads to seeking the will of God with intensity and righteousness. The advice that St. Ignatius of Antioch gave to one of his fellow bishops is valuable for them: “Nothing is done without your agreement, but you do not do anything without God's agreement”. Persons in authority must act in such a way that the brothers or the sisters can perceive that when they give a command, they are doing so only to obey God. Reverence for the will of God keeps those in authority in a state of humble seeking, so that their acting conforms as much as possible to that holy will. St. Augustine reminds us that the one who obeys always fulfils the will of God, not because the command of the authority necessarily conforms to the divine will, but because it is the will of God that is obeyed by the one who is in charge. But those in authority, on their part, must search assiduously with the help of prayer, reflection, and the advice of others for what God really wills. Otherwise, instead of representing God, superiors risk putting themselves carelessly in God's place. With the intention of doing God's will, authority and obedience are not therefore two distinct realities or things absolutely opposed but rather two dimensions of the same evangelical reality, of the same Christian mystery, two complementary ways of participating in the same oblation of Christ. Authority and obedience are personified in Jesus: for this reason they must be understood in direct relation to him and in a real configuration to him. Consecrated life intends simply to live *His* Authority and *His* Obedience.
- True authority in the Church is not a power grab, but a higher and more demanding form of obedience to God.
- Some thoughts from the Curé of Ars on the spirituality of obedience
 - SJV didn't really preach specifically about obedience very much. Instead he taught about the will of God, how Christ always sought, loved and put into practice the will of his Father and how we're called to do likewise.
 - Obedience begins with desiring what God desires
 - “We have to want what the good God wants. He wants to sanctify us through patience.”
 - “There are not two good ways of serving our Lord. There's only one, serving him as he wants to be served.”
 - “I submit myself to everything that you send me, as coming from you.”
 - Obedience is pleasing to God
 - “The sure and only way to please God is to remain submitted to his will in all the circumstances of life, whether in sickness that tests and purifies, in poverty, in ignorance and misunderstanding which unfortunately accompany us among men, in interior and moral pain, in the suffering we experience in a thousand ways.”
 - Obedience begins with a good morning offering
 - “Let us say each morning: “All to please you, o my God! All my actions with you!”
 - In *Opus Dei*, we say “serviam!”
 - Obedience increases our friendship with Jesus and changes how we pray
 - “Jesus Christ shows himself ready to do our will if we begin to do his.”
 - Obedience is our real spiritual strength
 - “Submission to the orders of the good God is for us what hair was to Samson, the principal of his strength that was so fatal to enemies.”
 - Obedience is necessary to do things well
 - “To do things well, it's necessary to do them as God wants, in total conformity to his designs.”
 - to give witness to the good God who loves us, we have to accomplish his holy will.”
 - Obedience is the path of the saints

- “I have known beautiful souls in the world who have no self-will, who are totally dead to themselves. That’s what the saints do.”
 - “Every time that we can renounce our will to do that of others, when it is not contrary to the law of God, we acquire great merits which are known only to God.”
 - “The good God doesn’t demand of us the martyrdom of the body, but only the martyrdom of the heart and of the will.”
- Conclusion
 - The story of the leper Naaman in the first reading can remind us of the heart of the matter of loving obedience. He receives from Elisha a command that strikes him as humanly absurd and stupid. “Go and wash seven times in the Jordan and your flesh will heal and you will be clean.” From a human point of view, washing one’s leprosy sores in the filthy Jordan river — not once, not twice but a humiliating seven times — made no sense at all. He got angry at such a request, so angry that he not only thought about leaving, but began to leave. But his faithful servants, as we read, reasoned with him and persuaded him to have faith in Elisha’s command and Naaman’s eventual faithful trust was rewarded.
 - St. Josemaria: “The power of obedience! The lake of Genesareth had denied its fishes to Peter's nets. A whole night in vain. Then, obedient, he lowered his net again to the water and they caught 'a huge number of fish'. Believe me: the miracle is repeated each day.”
 - The great 20th century Christian apologist C.S. Lewis wrote that there are really only two types of people in the world, “those who say to God ‘thy will be done’ and those to whom God says ‘*thy* will be done.” These are the two groups, he confidently asserted, who will end up on the opposite sides of the great eschatological divide. Those who wish to end up on Christ’s eternal right need to follow him in saying “thy will be done.”
 - “Those who merely say to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will not enter the kingdom of heaven,” Jesus tells us in the Sermon on the Mount, “but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven.”
 - “Do you resolve to render obedience faithfully to the successor of the blessed Apostle Peter?” May the Lord Jesus himself, who obeyed the Father perfectly, help us to obey that same Father in heaven through his Son and his Son’s earthly vicar with childlike confidence and trust, so that we might say now and forever, “thy will be done!” in heaven as we have in our actions here on earth.