



GUARDIANS OF THE SACRED LITURGY - WITHOUT BORDERS

LITURGICAL LITERACY PROGRAM (LLP)

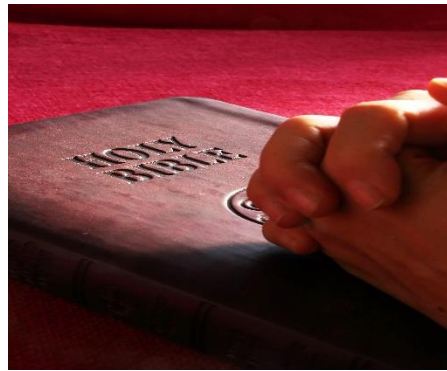
MODULE 1

The Gift of Obedience is

Obedience is better than

*Obedience is the
Without obedience, virtue is*

*Observe injunctions of the
keeping his laws, his
and decrees.*



the foundation of Faith.

sacrifice. (1 Sam 15:22)

*foundation of virtue.
just an abstract concept.*

*Lord following his ways and
commandments, his customs
(1 Kings 2:2-3)*

CALL TO OBEDIENCE AND APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION

THEOLOGY OF OBEDIENCE

In this session, I will not be touching on the philosophy or the psychology of obedience as a human behaviour influenced by authoritative forces and social function but on the theological aspect of obedience, that is, Obedience to God. In the Scripture and in ecclesiastical documents such as liturgical laws, rules and norms, the word “obedience” is used interchangeably with variant words such as “conform”, “comply”, “keep”, “observe”, or “in accordance with” and other similar words. Suffice it to say that these variant words which describe human social behaviours have different meanings in psychology depending on the cause of the behaviour. In our study of the theology of the liturgy and ecclesiastical laws, the variant words mentioned above refer to one and the same matter, obedience to God.

Why do we need to talk about obedience? Obedience is at the core of our existence. It is the foundation of our relationship with God from the very beginning of God’s creation of the universe and humanity. God said the words, heaven and earth were created. The earth was a “formless void” and dark. God uttered the words of creation and everything he called upon

obeyed and came into existence in its proper order and perfect arrangement. He “formed man from the dust of the ground” and breathe into him; the woman, from the ribs of the man.

Old Testament

OBEDIENCE was the first lesson and first commandment that God taught us through Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. After God created Adam, God put him in the garden of Eden where trees grew with the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the middle. And God gave Adam this command: *“You are free to eat of all the trees in the garden. But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you are not to eat; for, the day you eat of that, you are doomed to die.”* And what did they do? Eve gave in to the temptation of the serpent and procured Adam to do the same. They ate the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. They disobeyed God. Human DISOBEDIENCE was the first sin. To God, it was unforgivable so that the descendants of Adam and Eve inherited the sin of the first parents, the original sin. He was so enraged that He drove them out of the Garden of Eden and put a curse on them. This gives us an idea of how much God hates disobedience. This should guide us in our relationship with God.

The descendants of Adam continued to wreak havoc on earth with their disobedience. God was once again infuriated and was unhappy with his creation. He vowed to blot them all out --- humans and animals alike. But Noah found favour with God that he decided to save him from his wrath. The Great Flood was the punishment that God brought to the descendants of Adam and Eve for their disobedience. The whole earth was annihilated sans Noah and his family who the Lord spared together with some animals.

The cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were burnt down by the Lord who rained sulfur and fire on the cities. All the people and what grew on the land were consumed by the raging fire as punishment for their disobedience to the Lord. The family of Lot including his two children were saved but his wife was not spared from God’s wrath for disobeying a simple instruction to not look back. For her disobedience she turned into a pillar of salt.

All throughout the Old Testament endless accounts of human disobedience and how God dealt with it dominated the stories. We recall the cruelty and torture that the Israelites suffered from the hands of the Egyptians and the messages of God passed on by Moses to the Pharaoh. The disobedience of the Pharaoh was dealt with by God with a series of disasters and plagues to the

Egyptian people as punishment. The final punishment by God was the death of the firstborn of the people including the Pharaoh's son and animals alike when the Lord passed through the land of Egypt. The Lord passed over the households of the Israelites displaying the blood of the lamb on the two doorposts and lintel of the houses as instructed by the Lord. God gave Moses and Aaron instructions on how to eat the first Passover meal including what and how to wear the garments and accessories. The Lord ordered them that this Passover festival must be observed all throughout the generations as a "perpetual ordinance". The Passover was the precursor of the liturgy that we celebrate today when Jesus, celebrating the Passover with his apostles at the Last Supper, instituted the Holy Eucharist.

God spoke and gave his laws first to the patriarchs (Abraham, Moses, et al.) and the prophets who in turn passed on the laws to the people of Israel. God appeared harsh and ruthless but always forgiving to those who came back to him, atoned for their disobedience and promised a life of obedience to the laws of the Lord.

It was to Moses that God gave the Ten Commandments to be strictly obeyed by the people of God. The first three Commandments deal with the worship of God while the rest are strict moral principles to be faithfully followed in human relationships. We will not discuss the commandments here but since the focus of the Liturgical Literacy Program (LLP) is the sacred liturgy, I would like to emphasize at this point that God specifically ordered keeping holy the Lord's day or as it was referred to at that time, the Sabbath. To demonstrate the significance of the worship of God and how important it is to keep the Lord's day holy, God ranked it as the third commandment. We will discuss the theology of the sacred liturgy in Module II.

New Testament

In the New Testament, no new laws were given, instead God sent his only begotten Son to perfect the laws. By perfecting the laws, he expounded on the laws received by the Jewish people in ancient times from the Old Testament. He made the old laws current and applicable to the existing circumstances and conditions of the time and its people. This is the first case of *aggiornamento*, adapting ancient laws and bringing it up to date to suit new conditions without replacing the old or changing it.

It is noteworthy to mention the perfect model of obedience to God in the person of Mary, the Virgin Mother of Jesus. At a tender age of 17 and a virgin, she said “Yes” to become the mother of God considering she did not have any experience in childbirth and in raising a child. And to make matters complicated, she was betrothed to a man to whom she has not had a physical relationship with. Without any hesitation and trusting in her faith in God, Mary unreservedly obeyed and submitted to the will of God. She willingly accepted the sufferings that she would endure as foretold to her by Simeon when she went for her purification at the temple at which she presented the child Jesus as was customary in the Jewish tradition.

To keep true to his teachings, Christ made himself subject to the Law. John the Baptist proclaimed a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins and exhorted the people to be baptized. Jesus had John the Baptist baptize him to follow the requirements of righteousness, “to do all that God requires”. What better way is there to model obedience to God than to be baptized himself by the “voice in the wilderness” who God sent to prepare the way for the Lord as prophesied by the prophet Isaiah..

Jesus as the Son of Man was even obedient to civil authorities and exhorted his disciples to do the same such as in paying taxes. Such was the righteousness of the Son of God in obedience to authority subordinate to him, that is worth emulating.

Jesus, the Son of God, was made subject to the law and was faithfully obedient to the Father. He carried out the age-old tradition of the Passover, a “perpetual ordinance” ordered by God to Moses and passed on to ensuing generations of the Jewish people, Jesus’ ancestors. It was at the celebration of the Passover with his apostles, which, little did they know was going to be their Last Supper with the Lord, that Jesus instituted the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist while they were eating. Jesus Christ transformed the ancient Passover ritual where a spotless lamb without stain was offered as a sacrifice into a Passover where the Lamb of God, the Son of God, was the spotless sacrifice. The right time has come to fulfil the salvific plan of the Father which was the reason God sent his only begotten Son into the world. In so doing, Christ renewed the old covenant originally with the Israelite people with the new and everlasting covenant with ALL the people of God. This Passover, now the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, is what we celebrate at the Sunday Mass and every time the liturgy of the Mass is celebrated at the altar of the Lord. We

will have more of the theological foundation and historical development of the sacred liturgy, the Mass, in Modules II and III.

Jesus never put to the test his unwavering obedience to God's will but rather he sustained and upheld it even leading to his death on the cross. In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus knew what was going to happen to him -- his passion, sufferings and death on the cross. He was "deeply grieved and agitated" that he sweated blood. He even asked the Father if it was possible to "let the cup pass" from him but not as his will but as the Father's will. And so, he was tortured and crucified on the cross. His death on the cross was the fulfilment of God's salvific plan where Jesus, the Son of Man and the Son of God was the sacrificial Lamb. He endured all these in obedience to the Father. The apostles and disciples of Jesus were witnesses to this event.

Jesus continued to proclaim the laws of God through the evangelists and epistle writers emphasizing obedience to the laws and the consequences of disobedience. The *kerygma* or teachings of Jesus in the gospels in parables and in direct instructions were all about keeping the laws. The chapter on the Final Judgment in the Gospel of Matthew presents an image of what is to come to those who obey God's laws and to those who disobey the laws.

Apostolic Succession

Jesus taught his disciples everything they needed to know about the Father. Peter found favour with Jesus as he proved to be the most knowledgeable about the Father and the truth about Jesus. He declared that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of the living God, when Jesus asked the disciples who did they think he was. On this, Jesus appointed Peter to lead the church in these terms: "*You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth, will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.*" Such powerful words of authority and confidence in Peter by the Christ himself, the Son of the living God despite his momentary lapses and infidelity to Jesus when he denied knowing the Lord after his arrest.

After the Resurrection of Jesus from the dead, before his Ascension into heaven, Jesus commissioned his eleven apostles in these words: "*All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the*

*Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to **OBEY** everything that I have commanded you.”*

Peter took the helm and led the eleven apostles in choosing Matthias as the replacement of Judas the Betrayer. After Pentecost when the Holy Spirit descended upon each and every one of the twelve with Mary, Peter addressed the crowd gathered outside the house where they received the Holy Spirit. He urged them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ in order to attain salvation and on that day, three thousand people were baptized. He was indeed an effective and powerful leader of the flock. Thus began the carrying out of their mission to baptize the people and to make disciples of all nations. The twelve spread all throughout the land and formed communities, thus began the church.

Peter governed the church formed by the apostles who trained other disciples to lead the newly formed communities. When there were big decisions to be made such as the case brought by Paul regarding the circumcision of the Gentiles, Peter called the elders and together they discussed the problem brought to their attention and came up with the solutions. Peter and the elders formed the First Council of Jerusalem, the forerunner of subsequent councils such as the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council popularly known as Vatican II. Peter became the first Pope succeeded by the Popes after him. The See of Peter is currently occupied by Pope Francis. The apostles became bishops and our bishops are successors of the apostles of Jesus.

Our Pope and bishops are successors of Peter and the apostles. The successor of a Pope is elected by the College of Cardinals who are bishops and archbishops just as the leaders of the ancient church were elected by the elders of the church. As the successor of Peter, the Pope has the same authority and confidence that Jesus had with Peter.

Call to Obedience

As successor of Peter, the Pope deserves the same respect and obedience from the people of his flock. Pronouncements, declarations, decrees and laws such as ecclesiastical and liturgical laws issued by the Pope and the Holy See, the members of which are cardinals and bishops who are successors of the apostles, are subject to the same obedience that the Father expected from the Israelites or Jewish people under the old covenant and from all the people of God, US, under the new and everlasting covenant.

As Peter with the apostles and elders who became bishops governed the newly formed Church through councils as we have seen in the Council of Jerusalem, the successors of Peter, the Popes after him followed the tradition. Different councils were formed at different times to deal with issues in the Church. The members of these councils were cardinals, bishops and other experts on different issues that needed to be dealt with by the Church who were inspired and guided by the Holy Spirit by enacting laws, norms and rules of conduct that the people of God must observe and keep.

Such was the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council or Vatican II, for short, held from 1962 to 1965. The first document issued by Vatican II was the *Sacrosanctum Concilium* or the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy in December 1963. It demonstrated that the top priority, the most important issue that beset the Church at the time was the celebration of the Sacred Liturgy. More details will be made available in Module III when we learn the Historical Development of the Sacred Liturgy.

The significant provision of this Constitution was the regulation of the sacred liturgy which states that:

- 22. 1. Regulation of the sacred liturgy depends solely on the authority of the Church, that is, on the Apostolic See and, as laws may determine, on the bishop.*
- 2. In virtue of power conceded by the law, the regulation of the liturgy within certain defined limits belongs also to various kinds of competent territorial bodies of bishops legitimately established.*
- 3. Therefore no other person, even if he be a priest, may add, remove, or change anything in the liturgy on his own authority.*

As a Constitution, it is a law, a juridical document or a legislative instrument that every member of the Church is expected to observe. Sadly, this is not the case as this provision, in particular art 22.3, is widely disobeyed by the clergy causing *irreverence or distortion* classified as *liturgical abuse* by the Church. The mission of the Guardians of the Sacred Liturgy Without Borders is to bring back compliance to the liturgical laws to stop the liturgical abuse, that is, to CALL the clergy to OBEDIENCE.

Prayer>:

Lord Jesus Christ, you were made obedient unto death, and your name was exalted among others. Teach us always to do the Father's will, so that, made holy by obedience which unites us to the sacrifice of your body, we can expect your great love in times of sorrow and sing a new song to our God.