



MI MONTHLY FORMATION (6)

In Fr. Kolbe's Marian and Missionary Spirituality

JUNE 2006 PRAYER INTENTION:

That, with you, Eucharistic Lady, we approach the banquet of life so to allow ourselves to grasp the dynamic presence of Christ and deepen our communion with our brothers and sisters.

Dear Friends,

The paternal command God gave to Israel through the prophet Jeremiah resounds all the more in contemporary life: *“Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be my people; and walk in all the ways that I command you, that it may be well with you”* (Jer 7: 23). Alas, Israel's response is also much like ours today: *“But they did not obey or incline their ear, but walked in their own counsels and the stubbornness of their evil hearts, and went backward, and not forward. From the day that your fathers came out of the land of Egypt to this day, I have persistently sent all my servant the prophets to them, day after day; yet they did not listen to me, or incline their ear, but stiffened their neck. They did worse than their fathers”* (7: 24-26). What shall we do to shift this doom? In Psalm 40: 7-9 we read: *“Sacrifice and offering you do not want; but **ears open to obedience** you gave me. **Holocausts and sin-offerings you do not require; so I said, ‘Here I am; your commands for me are written in the scroll. To do your will is my delight; my God, your law is in my heart!’**”* [Emphasis is mine]. Training our ears to listen to God's voice speaking to us through his word, through his Son, through the Holy Spirit and through the Church is the right answer to God's invitation to enter into a personal and intimate relationship with Him. Do you know that in the Jewish culture the expression “to have an open ear” meant “to obey” and that a pierced ear lobe was an ancient symbol of obedience? As a matter of fact, many people, men and women alike, still wear earrings to emphasize their beauty. Moreover then, for us believers this trend can become a good reminder of the importance of keeping our ears and hearts open to obedience: isn't it great?

In the NT Christ is the greatest example of perfect and loving obedience to the Father. His food was to do the will of the Father and to finish his work (cf. Jn 4: 34). *“Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered; and when he was made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him”* (Heb 5: 8-9). In fact, it is on the Cross that the Son of God reveals himself, definitively and fully (cf. Mk 15: 39), giving the certainty of God's concern for man. In his obedience to the Cross, he is exalted (cf. Phil 2: 8). The resurrection is the Father's answer to the choice of the Son who trusted in Him even on the Cross.

On Jesus' Way of the Cross, we also find Mary, his Mother. During Jesus' public life she had to step aside, to make place for the birth of Jesus' new family, the family of his disciples. She also had to hear the words: *“Who is my mother and who are my brothers?... Whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is brother, and sister and mother”* (Mt 12:48-50). On Calvary she is the Mother of Jesus, not only physically, but also in her heart. Even before she conceived him bodily, through her obedience she conceived him in her heart. It was said to Mary: *“And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son. He will be great and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David”* (Lk 1:31ff.). And she would hear Simeon say: *“A sword will pierce through your own soul”* (Lk 2:35). She would then recall the words of the prophets, words like these: *“He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; he was like a lamb that is led to slaughter”* (Is 54:7). Now these prophecies are taking place. In her heart she had kept the words of

the angel, spoken to her at the Annunciation: “*Do not be afraid, Mary*” (Lk 1:30). The disciples fled, yet she did not flee. She stayed there with a Mother’s courage, a Mother’s fidelity, a Mother’s goodness, and a faith which did not waver in the hour of darkness: “*Blessed is she who believed*” (Lk 1:45). Mary’s faith and obedience is Jesus’ greatest consolation.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC 144) clearly states:

“To obey (from the Latin *ob-audire*, to ‘hear or listen to’) in faith is to submit freely to the word that has been heard, because its truth is guaranteed by God, who is Truth itself. Abraham is the model of such obedience offered us by Sacred Scripture. The Virgin Mary is its most perfect embodiment.”

IMITATING MARY, OBEDIENT VIRGIN

As we reflect on the meaning and value of SPIRITUAL OBEDIENCE to God, we keep before our eyes the example of the Virgin Mary who “cooperated through free faith and obedience in human salvation.”¹ She uttered her “yes” in the name of all humanity and by her obedience became the new Eve, mother of the living. John Paul II in one of his audiences said:

“In stating her total ‘yes’ to the divine plan, Mary was completely free before God. At the same time, she felt personally responsible for humanity, whose future was linked with her reply. God put the destiny of all mankind in a young woman’s hands. Mary’s ‘yes’ was the premise for fulfilling the plan which God in his love had prepared for the world’s salvation. ... By her conduct, Mary reminds each of us of our serious responsibility to accept God’s plan for our lives. In total obedience to the saving will of God expressed in the angel’s words, she became a model for those whom the Lord proclaims blessed, because they ‘hear the word of God and keep it’ (Lk 11: 28)... For Mary, dedication to the person and work of Jesus means intimate union with her Son, motherly involvement in nurturing his human growth and cooperation with his work of salvation... For, as St. Irenaeus says, she ‘being obedient, became the cause of salvation for herself and for the whole human race’ (Adv. Haer., III, 22, 4)... Her motherhood, freely accepted in obedience to the divine plan, becomes a source of life for all humanity.”²

What we need to do, then, is to beg for the grace of a new heart and mind, able to adhere faithfully and unconditionally to God’s will by partaking in Mary’s ‘yes.’ Maybe, this is one of the many graces Mary has received from God for us; but no one has yet asked for it. St. Maximilian was convinced that “The fulfillment of God’s will is love and love is the very heart of holiness. Not in mortification, nor in prayer, nor in work, nor in rest, but only in obedience do we find the merit and essential quality of holiness” (June 23, 1936). We all know by experience that sometime it is not easy to discern, to accept and to do God’s will. For this reason we have in Jesus and Mary bright examples and above all powerful intercessors to whom we can appeal to obtain the grace of a docile heart.

Let us renew every day our trust in the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of our Lord Jesus Christ and our Mother. Her example of faith and prayer will lead us to an ever higher level of generous service to the Church and society. She is the most eloquent example of obedience to the Lord and of acceptance of his will; with her as our model, Jesus will most certainly be at the centre of our lives and apostolate.

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¹ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, 56.

² General Audience, 9/18, 1996, in *Theotokos*, Puline Books & Media, Boston, 2000.

PRAYER

Holy Mary, Mother of the Lord, you remained faithful when the disciples fled. Just as you believed the angel's incredible message – that you would become the Mother of the Most High, so too you believed in your Son at the hour of his greatest abasement. In this way, at the hour of the Cross, at the hour of the world's darkest night, you became the Mother of all believers, the Mother of the Church. We beg you: teach us to believe, and grant that our faith may bear fruit in courageous service and be the sign of a love ever ready to share suffering and to offer assistance. Amen.

RESOURCES FOR FURTHER DEEPENING THE THEME

Church's Teaching

From the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)

564 By his obedience to Mary and Joseph, as well as by his humble work during the long years in Nazareth, Jesus gives us example of holiness in the daily life of family and work.

908 By his obedience unto death, Christ communicated to his disciples the gift of royal freedom, so that they might 'by the self-abnegation of a holy life, overcome the reign of sin in themselves.

2825 'Although he was a Son, [Jesus] learned obedience through what he suffered' (Heb 5: 8). How much more reason have we sinful creatures to learn obedience—we who in him have become children of adoption. We ask our Father to unite our will to his Son's, in order to fulfill his will, his plan of salvation for the life of the world. We are radically incapable of this, but united with Jesus and with the power of his Holy Spirit, we can surrender our will to him and decide to choose what his Son has always chosen: to do what is pleasing to the Father.

1871 Sin is an utterance, a deed, or a desire contrary to the eternal law. It is an offense against God. It rises up against God in a disobedience contrary to the obedience of Christ.

1011 In death, God calls man to himself. Therefore the Christian can experience a desire for death like St. Paul's: "My desire is to depart and be with Christ" (Phil 1:23). He can transform his own death into an act of obedience

and love towards the Father, after the example of Christ.

2053 ... In the three synoptic Gospels, Jesus' call to the rich young man to follow him, in the obedience of a disciple and in the observance of the Commandments, is joined to the call to poverty and chastity. ...

More Resources

Bible: Ex 24: 7; Deut 11: 27; 1 Sam 15: 22; Rom 1: 5; 5: 19; 16: 26; Heb 5: 8; 1 Pt 1: 22
Marian: Lk 1:38; 2: 22-24, 39-40

Benedict XVI, Message to the Youth in occasion of the 21st WYD, April 9, 2006 - at http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/messages/youth
Poland, May 2006 at http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/travels/2006/index_polonia_en.htm

CCC Part Four (2709-2719; 2746-2751)
MI General Statutes nn.7-8, 22-26
www.consecration.com

"A little drop of simple obedience is worth a million times more than a whole vase full of the choicest contemplations."

St. Mary Magdalene de Pazzi

MI Youth-Beat

From Benedict XVI

“The author of the Letter to the Hebrews wrote: ‘Indeed, the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow; it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart’ (4:12). It is necessary to take seriously the injunction to consider the word of God to be an indispensable ‘weapon’ in the spiritual struggle. This will be effective and show results if we learn to listen to it and then to obey it. ... While Abraham exemplifies this way of listening which is obedience, Solomon in his turn shows himself to be a passionate explorer of the wisdom contained in the Word. When God said to him: ‘Ask what I should give you,’ the wise king replied: ‘Give your servant therefore an understanding heart’ (1 Kings 3:5,9). The secret of acquiring ‘an understanding heart’ is to train your heart to listen. This is obtained by persistently meditating on the word of God and by remaining firmly rooted in it through the commitment to persevere in getting to know it better.” ...

“Saint James tells us: ‘Be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves. For if any are hearers of the word and not doers, they are like those who look at themselves in a mirror; for they look at themselves and, on going away, immediately forget what they were like. But those who look into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and persevere, being not hearers who forget but doers who act - they will be blessed in their doing’ (1:22-25). Those who listen to the word of God and refer to it always, are constructing their existence on solid foundations.

‘Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them,’ Jesus said, ‘will be like a wise man who built his house on rock’ (Mt 7:24). It will not collapse when bad weather comes. To build your life on Christ, to accept the word with joy and put its teachings into practice: this, young people of the third millennium, should be your program! There is an urgent need for the emergence of a new generation of apostles anchored firmly in the word of Christ, capable of responding to the challenges of our times and prepared to spread the Gospel far and wide. It is this that the Lord asks of you, it is to this that the Church invites you, and it is this that the world - even though it may not be aware of it - expects of you! If Jesus calls you, do not be afraid to respond to him with generosity, especially when he asks you to follow him in the consecrated life or in the priesthood. Do not be afraid; trust in him and you will not be disappointed.”

Message to the Youth, 2/22/06

Obedience of & to god

*By Fr. Raniero Cantalamessa
Preacher to the Papal Household*

“Christ’s obedience is the most salient aspect in the apostolic catechesis. ‘Christ became obedient unto death, even death on a cross’ (Philippians 2:8); by one man’s obedience many will be made righteous’ (Romans 5:8-9). Obedience appears as the key to the reading of the whole history of the passion, from where it takes its meaning and value. ...

Let us try to understand in what Christ’s obedience consisted. As a child, Jesus obeyed his parents; as an adult he submitted himself to the Mosaic Law; during the passion he submitted himself to the Sanhedrin’s and Pilate’s sentence. However, the New Testament does not mention these obediences; it mentions Christ’s obedience to the Father. St. Irenaeus interprets Jesus’ obedience in the light of the Songs of the Servant, as an interior, absolute submission to God, carried out in a situation of extreme difficulty...

Let us try to extract some practical teaching for our life, remembering the invitation of the First Letter of Peter: ‘Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.’ ...

As soon as one tries to find in the New Testament in what the duty of obedience consists, a surprising discovery is made, that is, that obedience is seen almost always as obedience to God. There is also talk, of course, of the other forms of obedience: to parents, employers, superiors, civil authorities, ‘to the whole human institution’ (1 Peter 2:13), but much less often and in a much less solemn manner. The substantive ‘obedience’ itself is used only and exclusively to indicate obedience to God or, in any case, to instances that are on the part of God, except in one passage of the Letter to Philemon, where it indicates obedience to the Apostle. ...

But is it possible and meaningful to speak today of obedience to God, after the new and living will of God, manifested in Christ, has been expressed and fully objectified in a whole series of laws and

hierarchies? Is it licit to think that there still exists, after all this, ‘free’ wills of God that must be accepted and obeyed?

Only if one believes in an actual and punctual ‘Lordship’ of the Risen One in the Church, only if one is convinced in one’s heart that also today -- as the Psalm says – ‘The Mighty One, God the Lord, speaks ... and does not keep silent’ (Psalm 50:1), only then is one able to understand the need and the importance of obedience to God. It consists of listening to God who speaks, in the Church, through his Spirit, which illuminates the words of Jesus and of the whole Bible and confers authority on them, making them channels of the living and actual will of God for us.

But as in the Church institution and mystery they are not opposed, but united, so we must show that spiritual obedience to God does not dissuade from obedience to the visible and institutional authority; on the contrary, it renews it, strengthens and vivifies it to the point that obedience to men is the criteria to judge if obedience to God does or does not exist and if it is authentic. ...

But, why is it so important to obey God? Why does God want so much to be obeyed? Certainly not because he likes to command and have subjects! It is important because by obeying we do the will of God, we want the same things God wants, and thus we fulfill our original vocation, which is to be ‘in his image and likeness.’ We are in the truth, in the light and as a consequence in peace, as the body that has reached its point of stillness. Dante Alighieri enclosed all this in a verse considered by many the most beautiful of the whole ‘Divine Comedy’: ‘and in loving him we find our peace’ (Dante Alighieri, *Paradiso*, 3, 85).”

[You may read this and the other Lenten Sermons Fr. Cantalamessa gave to the Pontifical Household at www.Cantalamessa.org English/ Homilies and Talks]

Praying with psalm 40

R. Here am I, Lord; I come to do your will.

“I waited, waited for the LORD; who bent down and heard my cry,
Happy those whose trust is the LORD, who turn not to idolatry or to those who stray after falsehood. **R.**

Sacrifice and offering you do not want; but ears open to obedience you gave me.
Holocausts and sin-offerings you do not require; so I said, ‘Here I am; your commands for me are written in the scroll. To do your will is my delight; my God, your law is in my heart!’” **R.**

Wisdom for our time

From *Behold Your Mother*, Pastoral Letter,
USCCB

“Mary is Queen of the home. As a woman of faith, she inspires all mothers to transmit the Christian faith to their children. In the setting of family love, children should learn free and loving obedience, inspired by Mary’s obedience to God. Her example of concern for others, as shown at the wedding feast of Cana, will exercise its gentle influence. ‘He went down with them ... and was obedient to them ... (Jesus) progressed steadily in wisdom and age and grace before God and men’ (Lk 2: 51-52). This obedience of Jesus is emphasized throughout the New Testament: at Nazareth, throughout his ministry in which he sought only to do his Father’s will, even unto death. The Gospel makes clear also Mary’s obedience to the Law and to the traditional prayer life of her people. This is evident, for example, in her annual trip to Jerusalem for the Passover. Faithful to the Law of Moses, the holy couple brought Jesus to the Temple, his Father’s house, for the presentation. Such obedience was the flower of Mary’s faith. Because of it, God found her worthy to be the Mother of his Son” (# 137).

From the Writings of Fr. Faccenda, OFM Conv.

“It is very important for us to rediscover the dimension of “attentive listening” because through listening the light of God becomes real, with light comes strength and with strength also comes the courage to continue the journey and to be perseverant. Only thus is it possible to understand the vocation God’s love is calling us to.”

“We must be ready to imitate the attitude of the Virgin in listening in order to be able to move from pondering the word to uttering our “yes” to the word. After having listened we must be ready to act upon the truth. ‘Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word’ (Lk 1: 38).”

“The real greatness of Mary consists in her conformity to the saving will of God. Responding to our vocation we adhere to the will of the Father, which is a will of forgiveness, mercy and salvation. In this way, we take our place in His plan of salvation.”

(Fr. Luigi Faccenda*, *The Disciple Took Mary into His Home*, 1996, page 74-75)

* Fr. Faccenda, OFMConv. (1920-2005), is the Founder of the Fr. Kolbe Missionaries of the Immaculata.

Dates to Remember

- 4** PENTECOST SUNDAY
- 5** Ordinary Time resumes with the 9th week
- 11** THE MOST HOLY TRINITY
- 13** *St Anthony of Padua*, Doctor of the Church
- 18** THE MOST HOLY BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST. Father’s day (USA)
- 23** THE MOST SACRED HEART OF JESUS
- 24** THE BIRTH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST. Solemnity
- 25** Twelfth Sunday in OT
- 29** STS. PETER AND PAUL APOSTLES. Solemnity

FROM THE WRITINGS OF ST. MAXIMILIAN KOLBE

“The full essence of holiness is to be in accord with God’s will. The soul which has determined that its will be one with God’s, senses an unspeakable happiness; it possesses peace and serenity, and that immovable foundation which is God himself.”

“Perfection does not depend upon great things, but upon the punctual and conscientious fulfillment of small things; nor does it depend upon long prayers and mortifications, but upon the exact execution of what God wills.”

“We have consecrated ourselves to the Immaculata as her complete property and possession through a special act of dedication. She is the most perfect instrument in the hand of God; we, in turn, are simple instruments in her hands. When, then, will we be able to battle effectively and most perfectly against the evil that exists in the world? This is the most important and only thing that should concern us.”

In *Maria Was His Middle Name*, Pages 78, 124, 148

Discussion corner

- How would you describe the main characteristic of Jesus’ obedience?
- Are you convinced that we should follow in his footsteps?
- Are you convinced that today God also speaks to us in the Church, through his Spirit and through the legitimate authorities?
- Why it is so important to obey God?
- How does St. Maximilian describe the true essence of holiness?
- Do you call upon Mary when doing God’s will is particularly excruciating?
- Recall some experiences of obedience that brought you interior peace.