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Obedience

Fr. Randy Roche

Loyola Marymount University

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Obedience

Some people are quite serious about sending their pet dogs to obedience school, though not many talk about sending their cats. Some of us consider obedience as suitable more for pets and children than for adults. If obedience were only related to the following of commands, no wonder we would think of it as of little value for mature persons. But when our hearts give us indications of a better course of action even before we mentally gather all relevant information, we find ourselves engaged in a kind of obedience that corresponds with our highest aspirations.

Many of us have discovered the "obedience of faith," where the experience is that of trust: trust in ourselves in choosing to heed the internal movements that seem appropriate to us, and trust in God who can and does give us recognizable and helpful interior impulses to act or refrain from acting that we can rightly consider as loving commands. If we trust God's knowledge of every aspect of reality and God's love for us, we would be failing ourselves and our best interests to refuse.

If a really good friend says "come with me right away" without explaining, we will go. We are willing to obey, trusting that this person knows us well enough to lead us where we would go if we had possession of all the reasons. But because we trust, we do not demand reasons, and we accompany our friend as requested. We are being reasonable when we trust people, or God, especially when we consult, even for only an instant, that place in our hearts where we sense approval or disapproval for our decisions.

When God speaks to us through our perceptions, we are not obliged to obey, as would those who are bound by a law and become liable to punishment if they fail to heed it, or as though a police officer had told us to do something which we refused. The obedience of faith is not a doctrine, but a practice that is learned through interpreting specific interior events as being of God, and in our favor. As we become accustomed to the ways God acts in us, we grow in sensitivity to the indications of "better" as opposed to "less good." Rather than perceiving a harsh command, our experience is almost always like being told a truth, whether convenient or not, by someone who has our best interests at heart: a fair description of God's relationship with us.

The obedience of faith has great benefits, since we do not have to go through a detailed decision-making process dealing with reasons for and against an issue each time we trust a command. When we have found God to be trustworthy in our experience of interior movements, obedience becomes a habitual support for increased efficiency in all that we do. This

efficiency is much more than growth in a capacity to accomplish more and better-quality work, but also entails deeper satisfaction in our relationship with God and increased contentment with our manner of life.

Obedience can be a great blessing.