

QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY

Gospel: Saint Luke 18: 31-43

Three sorts of persons who obey without
gaining the merit of blind obedience

15.1 First Point

The blind man whom Jesus Christ cured in today's Gospel, and whom he had previously asked: What do you wish me to do for you?,¹¹⁴ is a figure of those persons whose superiors are forced to ask them what is agreeable to them and who want to examine what they are going to be asked to do before showing that they are disposed to do it. There are three sorts of such self-willed religious. Some examine the order given; before obeying they must know what the superior intends to command them, so that they can consider if it is acceptable to them, if it will be too much trouble for them, or if they have some condition to propose to make the execution easier and more convenient for them. They also have a number of other reflections to make, completely natural.

The truly obedient examine nothing, pay attention to nothing except that they must obey. Faith has full charge of their minds and forbids all these considerations.

15.2 Second Point

The second type of religious, those who want to see before believing and obeying, are those who give reasons to their superior, either to dispense themselves from carrying out what is asked, or to do the thing in some way other than asked, or to make the superior see that something else would be better than what he desires.

True obedience does not admit of any such reasoning, because it is based on faith, which is infinitely superior to reason. Hence, to obey properly one should not use any reasons. For if, before we submit, we need to be convinced or at least persuaded by reason, then it is no longer because God commands that we obey, but because the order appears reasonable to us. We are then no longer acting like truly obedient people, but like a philosopher who prefers reason to faith.

Which of these two ways of acting guide you with regard to your superiors? Do you reason with them and try to bring them to command what you like? Is this not really, in a certain way, placing yourself above them and laying down the law to them?

15.3 Third Point

The third type of religious, those who cannot obey blindly, are those who by a shameful profanation of what is most sacred in religion, that is, the fulfilling of God's will, presume on their own lights to such a degree that they try to prove to their superiors that they are wrong to command such a thing, that what they have been told to do is contrary to good sense. Such was the behavior of that novice who deserved to be dismissed by Saint Francis for wanting to maintain his way of judging against that of the saint.

Look upon such conduct with intense horror, for it destroys obedience; regard it in a community as the abomination of desolation in the holy place.¹¹⁵ Obedience, to be perfect, must be blind and as such it cannot admit of any contradicting, reasoning, examining, nor even the slightest reply.

¹¹⁴ Lk 18:41

¹¹⁵ Mt 24:15