

PROPOSITUM



THE OBEDIENCE OF LOVE

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Editorial

Most religious will agree that the living of the evangelical, vowed life in today's world poses numerous challenges. Following upon the last General Assembly of the International Franciscan Conference in May 2009, the Council of the IFC decided it was appropriate to continue our discussions on how the living of evangelical Franciscan TOR life may become a disturbing presence in the 21st century in the same way as was Francis and Clare in their time.

We decided that we would take a serious look at the three vows that we profess and the four foundational values of the Rule. In doing this, it became evident that a Medieval European cultural filter was in place since the form of life comes to us from the 13th century. We asked ourselves: "What do obedience, poverty and chastity mean in the 21st century in cultures that are *not* European or Western and how are they lived"? To this end, we have invited Sisters and Brothers from different cultures to help us reflect on the meaning of these vows and how they are perceived as challenging values in a variety of cultures. The ultimate purpose of these studies is to understand how the evangelical counsels may be a challenging presence that calls young men and women to desire to live these in new forms of consecrated life that breathe our TOR Franciscan charism.

In this issue we look at the vow of obedience by considering how the school of Giotto allegorized Francis' living of holy obedience. Dr. Loredana Nepi researched the symbolic, artistic and theological meaning of this panel of the vault over the altar in the lower church of the Basilica of St. Francis in Assisi.

We begin with the article of Fra Antun Badurina, TOR, from Croatia in Europe. The author attempts to describe from a historical point of view how obedience was dealt with in the formation process situating it with the context of the spiritual patrimony of his

province as well as the tradition of the TOR. He will conclude with some very personal remarks on how obedience is learned and lived within his culture in four different ways: first in the practice of the art of listening, then by deepening an appreciation of the Christological aspect of obedience, thirdly through a knowledge of the Rule and the Constitutions and finally by means of a permanent formation in the practice of obedience.

The second article by Sr. Patricia Hutchison of the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia and who is director of the Neumann Institute for Franciscan Studies at Neumann University in Aston, PA widens the perspective by looking at the issues of young people who live in a rapidly changing context in North America. How can they live an “obedience of love” when the society within which they have been formed demonstrates ambivalence around these two realities? Sr Pat explores issues that are key for attracting and forming young women and men in the practice of religious obedience so that they might become a disturbing presence in today’s modern North American society.

Sr. Loice Kashangura, from the Franciscan Missionary Sisters for Africa (FMSA), teaches at St. Bonaventure- Franciscan Formation Centre, Philosophical College, Lusaka, Zambia. In her article she reflects on the traditional values that are found among the Shona peoples as a background for understanding how obedience may be understood and lived in the mind set and consciousness of Africans. Respect and obedience go hand in hand in this cultural setting. Listening is a strong component for the structure of African societies. What needs to be learned and practiced is the just equilibrium between vertical and horizontal authority from the cultural overlay that comes from African tradition life styles and the insertion of religious life into these cultures.

The final article written by Fra. Mathew M. Vallipalam o.f.m. Cap., India who is director of Centre for Religious Research, Gethsemany, Changanacherry in India takes a systematic look at the

vow of obedience as it is practiced in India. In comparing Indian non-Christian culture to the culture of Religious life we learn many essential differences between a religious life style that is Buddhist and one that is Christian. Often time there are no parallel structures in religious life of Buddhism and Christianity. India is a vast country that does not have just one dominant culture but several ones. This factor may contribute to the difficulty of how to understand, live and form women and men in religious life. Against the renewal of Vatican II the Indian cultural context offers many challenges but also some new ways of living the vow of obedience.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James F. Puglisi, SA". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J' and a trailing flourish.

Fr. James F. Puglisi, SA
President, IFC-TOR



**The Allegory of Obedience in the Frescoes of the Lower Basilica of Saint Francis of Assisi;
Assisi, Lower Basilica of Saint Francis, Crossing Vault,
Giottoesque Master (Master delle Vele), Allegory of
Obedience, 1315-1320 ca.**

Dt. Loredana Nepi

Brief Iconographic Analysis

In the nave of the transept of the Lower Basilica of Saint Francis of Assisi are painted the Allegories of Poverty, Obedience and of

Chastity and Saint Francis in glory. Concerning the attribution and the date of these frescoes there has been much discussion, but the opinion that the frescoes are the work of the studio of art of Giotto seems to be the one accepted. In a particular way, regarding the frescoes of the nave, the so called Master delle Vele, has been indicated as the author and affirmed that the date is around the second decade of the Three-hundred¹

The Fresco of the Allegory of Obedience is accompanied by an inscription which illustrates the significance or meaning and reference to it will be made in the text.

The summit of the composition contains the representation of Saint Francis who bears a yoke – pole or harness - on his back, a yoke, the cords of which are held by two hands that come out from the higher corner of the sail. Francis bears the stigma and his head is surrounded by the halo. On each side there is an angel kneeling down, holding a scroll: on the parchment on the left is read: “Tollite jugum obedientie super vos”, while the one on the right says: “...istum per crucem penitentie”.²

The presence of Francis bearing the stigma, the seal impressed by Christ himself on his flesh, and the yoke held by divine hands confirm that the Rule was directly inspired and approved by God. The bond between the stigma and the approbation of the rule is illustrated by Bonaventure in the *Legenda major* (IV, 9-10), of which this image seems to be the perfect figurative transposition.³

Francis is standing up on the roof of a sort of gallery which is the center of the composition. The gallery delimits the environment that recalls a presbytery , with a seat that extends all along the wall in the back, as in a choir, on which it is seen sketched the lower part of a painted Crucifix and on each side a figure, perhaps the Virgin and Saint John.

At the center of the gallery Obedience is seated, wearing a religious habit with the hood on the head and a mantle. Obedience has wings, a detail which could have been inspired by the description of

the Franciscan vows given by Ubertino da Casale in his *Arbor vitae crucifixae Jesu*, composed in 1305: "Obedience has wings because it is not only acting and praying that it obeys up to perfection, but also converts the neighbour to do likewise, preaching, going on a pilgrimage and conversing".⁴

With the forefinger of the left hand Obedience makes a sign to the friar kneeling in front of him to keep silence. This gesture illustrates the verse of the inscription which accompanies the fresco: "*linguam silens clarificat*". With the right hand Obedience hands over the yoke to the friar who receives it and bends down to place it on the back with his own hands. This gesture is highly significant: the friar voluntarily subjects himself to Obedience.

On the left at the side of Obedience Prudence is seated, represented like a woman with two faces, young and old with a crown on the head. In the right hand she holds a compass and with the left hand a mirror turned toward the friar kneeling down at the feet of Obedience. The inscription describes Prudence as being capable to foresee the future events, to know the present events and to forget the past events and to regulate like a compass everything that should be done. The mirror, defined in the inscription as *speculum virtutis*, refers to the knowledge of self to which Prudence leads one. .

At the right of Obedience Humility is kneeling down, represented by a young woman who lowers her eyes toward the earth and holds a candle in the right hand.

On the first level on the left side there is an angel kneeling down who introduces two young men, taking the first one by the wrist. Much has been discussed about the identity of these two persons. They have been interpreted as two postulants on the point of entering the Order, but basing oneself on the position that they have in this composition and the gesture of the angel, traditionally reserved to the donors of a sacred image, the young man at the side of the angel has been identified with Cardinal Napoleone Orsini,

who purchased the chapel of Saint Nicholas in the north transept of the Lower Basilica.⁵

On the left side an angel kneeling down turns toward a figure similar to a centaur with a lion's tail, covered with a royal mantle, which instead turns in the opposite direction in regard to the center of the scene. This monstrous figure is traditionally interpreted as Pride, in opposition to the virtue of Humility which dominates in the composition.

The composition is completed on the right and the left by two hosts of angels kneeling down at the extreme end opposed to the composition and holding an object in their hand similar to a horn of plenty which would make one think of the rhyton, the horn of sacred oil to anoint the kings.⁶

¹ A. Tomei. "La decorazione della Basilica di San Francesco ad Assisi come metáfora giottesca", *ImagoRomae (in linea) il 22 febbraio 2009*.

http://www.imagoromae.com/public/ftp/fotoDiServizio/files/Giotto/Saggio_Alessandro_tomei.pdf. Consulted on November 5, 2010.

² G. Salvadori. "Le vele d'Assisi e la poesia di Dante", *Rassegna contemporanea*, 4, 7 (1911) 21.

³ "Ad cuius observantiam fratres ferventer inducens, dicebat, se nihil ibi posuisse secundum industriam propriam, sed omnia sic scribi fecisse, sicut sibi fuerant divinitus revelata.

Quod ut certius constaret testimonio Dei, paucis admodum evolutis diebus, impressa sunt ei stigmata Domini Iesu (cfr. Gal 6,17) digito Dei vivi (cfr. Apoc 7,2) tamquam bulla summi Pontificis Christi ad confirmationem omnimodam regulae et commendationem auctoris, sicut post suarum enarrationem virtutum suo loco inferius describetur."

⁴ E. Lunghi. "The influence of Ubertino da Casale and of Pietro di Giovanni Olivi in the iconographic program of the Lower church of Saint Francis of Assisi", *Collectanea Franciscana* 67 (1997) 173-174.

⁵ *Ibidem*, 176-177.

⁶ G. Salvadori.. "Le vele di Assisi" cit., 20.

The vow of Obedience in the Province of the Third Order Regular in Croatia

Fr. Antun Badurina, TOR

1. Introduction

Today in my Province¹ it is spoken of the religious vows in general, including the vow of obedience, but in a more systematic way in the Novitiate and in the Spiritual Exercises before profession and, sometimes, in days of spiritual recollection during religious life after profession. After that, all the formation that follows is left to personal initiative, to the interest of the individual and to the care of the Provincial Minister and of the Provincial Government, and obedience is spoken about, mostly, when it is a case of some situation of religious disobedience.

I remember, in the past, that the opportunity offered to all to know the theology of the vow of obedience and to verify its practice, was much more frequent: the reading of spiritual literature during the noon meal (in the Novitiate) the reading of the Rule and the Constitutions, on Friday, in all the communities; the “spiritual reading” in common, half an hour during all the stages of initial formation; the public examination of conscience in the penitential encounters which very frequently concerned the exercise of the vows and the daily schedule; the personal interview with the formator and with the Minister and their admonitions. «The cult of the Rule» and «The cult of the vows»² were the frequent themes treated on the occasions mentioned above.

When it was proposed to me to write for *Propositum* how the vow of obedience is lived in our culture, I became aware that this task exceeds my capacity because there should be a deeper understanding of the cultural, sociological, psychological and anthropological elements, knowledge of the mentality of the individual regions of Croatia and, finally even some investigation of the situation that exists. But, when I was given the freedom to

elaborate the theme according to my possibilities, I decided to offer to the reader whatever I can: some information on the situation of the Croatian Province of Saint Jerome – following the above mentioned differences, between today's attitude and the previous one concerning the vows. I will do it from the point of view of my own formation to religious life and of the experience acquired from having been formator and superior. This experience has been acquired in practice. The impact received from a series of reactions of the individual candidates to religious life and of the friars in what concerns the vow of obedience is not easy to reduce it to a common denominator. I consider it useful even to add a retrospective gaze at the spiritual patrimony of the Province which has formed our attitudes.

To accept the risk of writing on the vow of obedience, in spite of feeling inadequate to do it, I live it as an act of obedience, very similar to the story of planting the cabbage upside-down, like Saint Francis did when he tested two young men who wanted to enter the Order.³

2. The way of seeing or idea of the vow of obedience during the time of personal formation

I entered the religious community when I was eleven and a half years old and for me it was completely natural to obey the elders, just as at home I obeyed my parents and as I received a reproach or scolding if I had not obeyed. The years and having forgotten have cancelled possible research and discoveries when I was young. What I can remember concerning the knowledge of the vow of obedience is condensed and linked to two names, to two masters of obedience during the whole period of my formation to religious life. They are: Father Alfonso Rodriguez (1526-1616), a Jesuit, during the Novitiate and Father Lothar Hardick, OFM, during the period of temporary profession.

During the whole year of Novitiate (1963/64) we read in the refectory during the noon meal the famous book of Father Rodriguez *Exercises in perfection and in Christian virtues*⁴ and we commented among ourselves the vivid examples with which the author had illustrated his presentations. And how could we not notice the anecdotes on perfect or “blind” obedience and the strange educational methods of the first monks who ordered their disciples “very frequently what, at first sight seemed unreasonable and foolish, and this to test them and to see if they would be able to subject their judgment and submit their will correctly»⁵. This is why Abbot Nestor when entering the Order said: «I and the ass are the same thing. Loaded with anything he carries everything without hesitation (Ego et asinus unum sumus. Quid quid ei imponitur, hoc portat, et sine mora)»⁶.

Rendering homage to the classical guide to obedience, that is to Father Rodriguez and to his ingenious and clever work, I want to stress that at the age of sixteen years I considered him as a master of a passive obedience that waits for the full initiative to come from the superior and, therefore, waits for his stimulus or his decision. To say the truth, the author also speaks of the initiative of the subject, but very discreetly and in passing by. Probably, my character corresponded to the first one. Now my opinion concerning Father Rodriguez, a religious with the reputation of a saint, drew up an ideal of a mature religious life, very difficult to attain and that, for us beginners, was not sufficiently motivated and also because it was not presented according to the criteria of the stages of human growth. According to his ascetical concept, mortification, particularly perfect obedience and humility, were the surest means to advance on the way toward sanctity. But it lacked the Christological foundation and motivation. The Superior was the center of life, he was «the voice of God” and the sure way toward perfection. In treating the theme of obedience no distinction was made between mature authority and authoritarianism.

During the time when I was studying Theology I met the person and the thought of the famous Franciscan Theologian Father Lothar Hardick, OFM. Being the representative of the students of our Province I participated in the III Seminar for all the Franciscan clerics of Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, which was held from the 10th to the 24th of September 1970 in Trsat (Croatia), a great Marian Franciscan Seminary in the city of Rijeka, to the north of the Adriatic Sea. The theme of the encounter was «The contemporary problems of Franciscan renewal»⁷. Father Hardick, the principal speaker, presented several important Franciscan themes. I remember very well, though, only one conference: «Colloquy on obedience and authority». In that conference he summarized his long research on Saint Francis and his writing in the following way: «If I could present briefly the concept of obedience of Francis, I would say that he distinguishes very clearly several types of obedience giving each type its own value. The first one is obedience to God. In it is included also obedience to the Church and to one's own conscience: «que non sunt contra animam»; the Church and the conscience in relation to God. The second type of obedience concerns the reality contained in “the rule and our life». The third type is «caritativa oboedientia ad invicem». And only the fourth type is «oboedientia erga superiorem». We have changed this order»⁸. In this concept of obedience the superior in any case is neither in the center nor in the first place. He is a servant of the common ideal and of the good of the brothers. Even though all the presentation is filled with wisdom, I want to stress the concluding lines: «Out of obedience to my fraternal community to which I belong and to the superiors who represent it, it is necessary to respect two rules. The first one: If I am invited to collaborate, I have to accept it. If the Order, the Province asks: «Do you have proposals?», we must say it, give them. In this way the right to grumble or murmur against is lost. The second: We should always

be capable to forget ourselves. This is also asked from the football team and, therefore, we also should be capable.

Still another rule: Never forget that we do not only live at supernatural level. In our communities we should also keep in mind the anthropological and sociological data, otherwise we sin against the divine law. And this happens very easily! We think that with the good intention and by means of Holy Communion anything can be solved, but instead, we should learn from sociology. A concrete example from another field: the ancient Constitutions demand to impose the spiritual exercises for ten days on the brother who has given himself to drinking. Today, we send such a brother to the doctor!“⁹.

The way I see and consider the vow of obedience and my behavior regarding it are moved, confronted and harmonized in the limits of the maximum extension created by these two names, by these two influential persons.

3. The vow of obedience in the spiritual heritage of my Province

Any cultural description or vision has to keep in mind the historical factors, that is, of the existence and of the continuity of determinate values because those form the mentality and the attitudes. The Province of Saint Jerome in Croatia is one of the more ancient of our Order. It was autonomous up to 1602. Beginning that year when it was united to the Order and up until now it lives in communion with the other Provinces of the Order. The first groups of religious of TOR in Croatia began to exist dispersed already in the second half of the two-hundreds. In the course of the three-hundreds the dispersed communities were united and became a congregation with a Minister and a Provincial Government. In the four-hundred Pope Sixtus IV (1471-1484), on April 8, 1473, gave juridical recognition to our Congregation giving it the name of Saint

Jerome, the famous father of the Church, who was born in this zone.

Data, documents and provincial tradition exist and from these it is clear that our predecessors constantly followed «the evangelical way of continuous conversion” - and the people called them “hermits of penance”. They dedicated themselves «to the works of mercy, particularly the care of the poor», including the sick, especially those with infectious sickness - precisely like the constitutions of the Order today describe our identity (art. 2). The evangelical spirit, obviously understood as the observance of the vows. The fruit of such a life are the many religious saints that we find in every century. In the observance of the vow of obedience are noted some individual cases of arbitrariness, but there were no scandalous excesses nor diffused phenomena nor the prolonged behaviour not in accordance with religious life.. Perhaps some religious and some disciplinary measures contributed to this result, because they foresaw severe sanctions which hindered non acceptable behaviour. I would like to mention some essential facts that confirm that the life of the religious life of the provincial community acted from its beginning according to the principle current of ecclesial life and of the Charism of the Third Order Regular. These facts known in the Province formed and have given orientations to generations of brothers. .

3.1. Since the second half of the four hundreds the Code is kept and cared for (unfortunately many have disappeared) written in beautiful Glagolitic characters (paleoslavic) and in the ancient Croatian language; in fact, it is a question of a manual of the spirituality of TOR. «The content of this Code shows that it belonged to a much more austere community, tending toward penitential life, to the Franciscan Glagolitic of the Third Order Regular; in this community many hermits lived, voluntary penitents, merciful Samaritans who worked in the leper colony, then Glagolitic priests,

confessors of the simple people and chaplains of the lazaretto”.¹⁰ In the Code is registered the faithful translation into Croatian of the *First letter of Saint Francis to the faithful* which is considered the first draft of the spiritual trend of TOR. The above mentioned translation is at the side of the “Code 225 of the Biblioteca Guarnacci di Volterra” - Vo-225 with the Latin text, discovered and published by Father Sabatier in 1900, is the only text of this letter of the Middle Ages that has been preserved.¹¹ Besides the Letter in the General Archives of the Province are also found two translations of the Rule of Nicholas IV of 1453 and of 1466 and the information on the third translation of 1432 (which was lost). For us it would be very precious to seek the bonds of union that existed between the Croatian autonomous congregation of that time, the other European communities of TOR and the spiritual centers (Utrecht, Italy and perhaps Spain).

3.2. The Constitutions of Fray Šimun Klimantović (recorder and redactor and because of this the Code has taken his name) written on April 12, 1492 to the Provincial Chapter in the convent of Saint Paul the Hermit on the island of Galevac close to the Adriatic city of Zadar (Zara). «The constitutions have 38 articles. They prescribe how it is necessary to behave in the cases in which it is the individual friar more than friars who do not exercise their religious duties or behave badly. It is a law that sanctions punishments for those who transgress, for those who do not observe the Rule and the Testament and do not live faithfully their religious life. In these 38 articles was stressed the rigorous style and the form of penitential life of the religious Friars in the Province of Dalmatia”.¹² Severe punishment was foreseen for the caprices of the religious as well as for the disloyal relationship toward the superiors, especially in what concerned the observance of the vow of obedience.

3.3. Father Antonio de Sillis (1607-1613), remembered as religious and general minister «learned man and saint» visited our Province two times after the union with the Order and both times he presided over the Provincial Chapter. He left a very interesting witness on our predecessors of that time: «Et certe cum Fratres nostri Ordinis ab initio vitam eremiticam affectarent, credendum est, eos non habuisse interulas lineas, sed asperam et rudem tunicam super carnem nudam; nec inplumeis lectis cubasse, sed super nudam humum vel super tabulas aut struem lignorum, vel ad plus super stratum foliorum foeni vel palearum... Et hodie tam laudabilis austeritas perseverat adhuc apud Dalmatas nostri Ordinis Fratres, ut ipsemet ego in visitationibus generalibus fuinexpertus». ¹³.

3.4. A less evident factor but more incisive is the book *The Imitation of Christ* of Thomas of Kempis (1379-1471). This book has exercised a strong influence on the formation of the religious spirit and, consequently, on the ascetical-theological attitude concerning obedience. This is the book that has been translated more into the Croatian language. The first translation was made by Marko Marulić (1450-1524), contemporary of Thomas of Kempis, a famous writer in the Latin language and “the father of Croatian literature”, one of the promoters in Europe of the reform after the Council of Trent (after the death of Saint Francis Xavier they found that he only had the Bible and the bestseller of literature of the time written by Marulic «De institutione bene beateque vivendi»); a man of a holy life and who had a great devotion to Saint Francis of Assisi. Approximately forty other translations followed that of Marulić up until now; among this we find the translation of Blessed Alojzije Steinac (1898-1960), Archbishop of Zagreb and Cardinal, faithful member of the secular community of the Third Order of Saint Francis. They were taken to the library of our Convent of S. Michele in Zadar and there I found eleven editions of the work of Thomas of

Kempis, from 1691 to 1998 (the previous editions were lost, just as many other things, when the religious in 1806 were expelled from their convents by the Government during the French occupation).¹⁴ To speak about obedience, humility and submission is the conducting thread of this spirituality (“modern devotion”), which is repeated like a refrain. Here are some examples: «Valde magnum est in oboedientia stare, sub Praelato vivere sui iuris non esse».¹⁵ or «Dominus: Filii, qui se subtrahere nititur ab oboedientia ipse se subtrahit a gratia; et qui querit habere privata, amittit communia».¹⁶ Or still «Disce voluntates tuas frangere; et ad omnem subiectionem te dare».¹⁷ This precious little book was for many religious a daily vademecum.

3.5. In the historical memory of the Province it is recalled that in 1768 the provincial community had 124 religious (of which 88 were priests), it is the largest number registered. Only thirteen years later, the number of religious diminished to 50. And this happened due to several causes: the laws of the Government against the Church which included also the suppression of the convents and the prohibition to accept candidates. In the evident danger of stagnation of religious life, the extraordinary and strong person of Father Antun Juranic (1719-1799) appeared, who because of his spiritual and intellectual stature, had gone beyond the boundaries of the Province that he had loved and for which he had sacrificed himself. He was elected provincial minister five times (1756-1787) and commissioner of the Minister General two times; he participated in the General Chapters four times; in 1773 he was elected general counsellor and in 1788 he received from the Pope the honorary title of the Minister General (ex-general). Thanks to his ability and to friendship with the civil and ecclesiastic authorities he succeeded in preventing that the decrees against religious life be carried out, and not only for our Province, but also for other Orders in the Republic of Venice. He wrote and published (in Venice and

Rome) eight different books of spiritual and liturgical content, but with a particular care he translated into Croatian and published in Rome in 1788, the Rule which served for the renewal of the religious spirit. The fact that our community was indicated as an example of renewal which had succeeded well, witnessed the degree in which he had succeeded to calm down the spirit of those who were agitated and upset and to restore the high standard to religious life. Father Antun Juranić has become a sort of adviser and spiritual expert for many masculine and feminine communities, and also for the Bishops. He who is well known and esteemed, has preached very much, has directed many spiritual exercises and popular missions; he has been Parish Priest and confessor. The continuation of the Province is closely linked to his name.¹⁸

3.6. The existence of the Province suffered the greatest danger during the first half of the nine hundreds. After the Austrian and Venetian Governments, the enlightened government of Napoleon continued with the decrees against the Church. In this way, in conformity to the “Restrictions to the religious corporations” (Milan February 8, 1806) eight of our convents were suppressed and many religious, believing that the decree was something temporary, did not go to other convents, but they were secularized. As a result of this the minimum number of religious in history was reached, there were only 32 of whom 18 were priests). Together with other capable and assiduous fighters for the existence of the Province, Providence gave Father Josip Dujmovic to the community (1833-1884), who had the particular Charism for renewal. He was elected Provincial Minister for the first time in 1869 at the age of thirty-six years of age and was re-elected three other times. His program of renewal contained in 30 points has strengthened the religious spirit, helped education and formation to

progress, has made the Province revive and become younger to such a point that it could even help the renewal and the expansion of the Order. The fruit of his solicitude and attentive care are his collaborators and disciples, excellent religious, for example Father Dragutin Parčić, lexicographer, Slavist and inventor of national importance; Father Stjepan Ivancić, historian of the Province and of the Order; Father Danijel Zec, Provincial Minister and procurator of the Order; Father Vjekoslav Canzutti, Apostle of the Third Secular Order; Father Stanko Dujmović, collaborator in the organization of the American Province; Father Jacinto Buic, his successor as Provincial Minister (for three mandates) and who continues his work of renewal. On Father Josip Dujmović, an exceptional religious, who died very soon, Father Emigdio Maricotti (General Minister from 1885 to 1897) has given witness, his friend and colleague at school in Rome; when he knew that Father Josip was sick he wrote: "Let us recommend him to God asking Him to save him, since truly his is a precious life; for our Order it would be a great misfortune to lose him".¹⁹ A year before his death he published the document on the Novitiate and on the formation of candidates after the Novitiate. In the points of the program (31) he describes with great detail the daily schedule of the novices from the time of rising until they retire to sleep and the content of the teaching. For example, twice a week, it should be spoken to the Novices about the Rule, the Constitutions and the Bulls and Papal Decrees which concern religious life. The prescription regarding the reading of Father A. Rodríguez is interesting, his spiritual Master, whose work was always at his side, this prescription remained in force up to the time of my own generation, almost a century later. "In the content of these disciplinary prescriptions one can see the

penitential spirit, characteristic of our first religious and of the whole Province in the course of its history up to our own time”²⁰

3.7. The more recent period is characterized by the request of Vatican Council II for renewal of religious life, as well as by frequent Franciscan anniversaries (Francis, Clare, Anthony of Padua, our Rule) which have extended and deepened the knowledge of the Franciscan spiritual heritage. In the continuity which forms and represents the mind and thought of the Province and in the way of acting for our time is inserted the work of Father Srečko Badurina (1930-1996), Bishop of Sibenik during the last nine years of his life. He obtained the diploma from the Alfonsianum in Rome in 1968, writing on “The adaptation of religious life to the changing conditions of the times”.²¹ He translated into Croatian the message of the Ministers General of the Franciscan «800^o anniversary of the birth of the father and brother Saint Francis (1981); with the collaborators he translated and prepared for the printing the new Rule of our Order (1984). He has studied the Rule and has written and spoken about it. The result of his activity was the book *Putovima obnove*²² a valid and well-grounded comment on the Rule. He was named provincial delegate for the elaboration of the new Constitutions; he translated the articles on the spirituality of the Third Order Regular.²³ In 1983, at the meeting of the young of the Franciscan Orders held in Rieti he delivered the conference on “Witness of fraternal charity today” and, the same year, in the General Chapter of our Order in Rome, he gave the conference on “The Charism of the Order in our Province”.²⁴ His activity was significant not only in the Franciscan sphere but also in a broader sphere of religious life.²⁵ In his study of the teaching of the Council on religious life he defines obedience as “faithful listening to God’s Will recognizing it even when He speaks by means of the weak instrument such as the superior; obedience is not in contrast with the democratic freedom as seen and is appreciated by the laity” and

he concludes: «I believe that on this aspect it is still necessary to work very much, particularly in formation. It could be said that we are invited to true conversion from passive obedience to active obedience. This also implies a new understanding of the exercise of authority: more in 'conformity to the contemporary evolution of society', as Father Tilard says".²⁶

The experience of the educator and Superior

Trying to remember what is essential that has contributed to my formation to obedience (Rodriguez-Hardick) and listing some aspects of the heritage of the Province connected with formation and which create the religious-cultural context, I think that a researcher of history would probably stress more than what I can do, and in a diverse way, but I cannot omit an important period in our religious life, those of us who are older and I would call it "the Post Conciliar Vacuum". It lasted almost thirty years. It was the time when the new Rule was being written (approved in 1982) and of the Constitutions ad experimentum (the new ones were approved in 1991). In this period of time many disciplinary prescriptions were omitted. Discussions were opened at all levels, and many things were considered to be relative. The stability of the common uniformity was shaken. It seemed that everything could be contested in the name of the two-fold principle of renewal: in order to return to the sources "ad fontes" and "the adaptation to the changing circumstances of the time" (PC 2). In this period, on the one hand creative and liberating and, on the other chaotic and perplex, I was named formator of the Seminarians (1974-1979), Master of Novices (1993-2001), local Minister (2001-2009) and Provincial Minister (1988-1992). I did not expect, not even dreamt, such a "splendid" religious career and for this, I was not even prepared. In the place of the sense of a burden because of the trust of the brothers, I have seen in this nomination an unjust burden or charge and a disproportioned responsibility. I asked myself: how

can one who is not educated, educate others and one who is not formed, form others? And I reached the conclusion that the Province finds itself before a great tribulation if it chose me, if it has named me as formator and superior. The test of obedience! In spite of the refusals and the repeated requests of resignation from the charge, of which some were accepted, most of the times in my evaluations my loyalty to the community prevailed, which I consider that it is a form of obedience and of availability. I am not skilful to analyse my experiences and to evaluate them in a more profound and scientific way. I limit myself to some observations and signs.

4.1. Candidates came to our Minor Seminary through different ways, without sufficient evaluation and for different reasons (some came only to be able to go to Secondary school). The true motivations were discovered gradually. It was necessary to accustom the Seminarians to discipline and to work, to offer them the first information on spiritual life and on religious life, and accompany them in their growth. At the end of the cycle of instruction, few remained. The principal reason, with the exception of some, was not the incapacity to study or the lack of intelligence. Even the best pupils left, the best even in what regards behaviour. Naturally, some times there was incapacity to understand and to accept the spiritual reality, psychic impediments and others, but the more frequent reasons which determined their leaving were the following:

4.1.1. The candidate when leaving his family did not have a just or right motivation for a religious vocation, and neither did he find it in the Seminary.

4.1.2. The candidate did not accept to educate his individual arbitrariness (frequently spoiled) to transform it into a disciplined and available will.

4.1.3. The candidate did not accept to submit his narcissistic and egoistic individualism to the common objectives and programs. .

From the point of view of our themes it can be rightly affirmed that the candidates did not have the ability or skill and the docility to understand the importance of obedience to God and out of love for God, obedience to the “common Rules” and to the Superiors. I confess my daily frustration because of the facility with which many candidates in daily practice went round the formator considering him completely superfluous and ridiculous. In the same way or even against what was accorded and without permission, the Seminarians transgressed the daily schedule or decided and resolved alone many things of greater or lesser importance. In such situations very little could be changed, and thus with the passing of time, I have learnt to diminish my interior tension evaluating the cases that I would have approved and those that I would not have approved or recommended in case I was asked. At first I would act by giving an indulgent admonition or, even, praising for a positive initiative. The other cases were the object for a colloquy, of instruction or of admonition, whether in the personal colloquy or in the common encounters.

4.2. During the eight years in which I directed the Novitiate I only had some groups of Novices. It seemed to me that the majority of them did not have the necessary maturity for the Novitiate, considering the modality of acceptance to religious life and the understanding of life according to the vows. I considered them as those who sit on two chairs. Were we more mature in our own time? I do not think so, but everything seemed to have a more serious form (for example the rite of vestition at the beginning of the Novitiate and the wearing of the religious habit) and everything was more demanding (there was no television or radio; to go out of the convent was very rare and exclusively something in common, wearing the religious habit and accompanied by the Master, there was more work and more discipline) and, therefore, there were not so many occasions to disobey, comparing the practice of obedience,

it was more real and harder. My experience with the Novices was the following: they allowed themselves to be guided quite well and their sense of collaboration, for obedience and for life in common was better than in the Seminary. A certain type of comfort that was acquired, the lack of sacrifice and of initiative, and limiting themselves to do the things that were necessary and what was commanded, annulled in a certain way the promising spiritual progress, especially when the spaces of the convent all of a sudden seemed to be very narrow for the Novices. This pounding 'ahead-backwards' generally was interpreted as a psychological phase of growth which later, during the period of temporary profession would have lead to greater maturity.

I tried to give the attention due to the content of the vows and therefore, also to the value of obedience inviting well prepared spiritual directors. At the same time I informed the formator of the professed to know exactly what the situation was on the elaboration of the individual themes and what else should still be done with the candidates. To me it seemed that the priority was the knowledge of the letter and spirit of the Rule and of the Constitutions and the understanding of life according to the vows.

4.3. The first verification in what regards obedience in a community for each provincial minister are the transfer of the brothers from one place to the other and the observance of the decrees. Someone has said that the decisions which concern persons are a cross for every Superior. I consider significant the fact that as Provincial Minister I should not change nor take away the decrees. Just the same, since the cross cannot be avoided, without entering into the details, I only want to quote the reports of my experiences that I gave in the Plenary Council of the Province after the canonical visitation (July 1990) in the middle of my mandate and to the Provincial Chapter at the end of my mandate (November 1992). In the first report it was a question only of a brief reference

to the situation concerning the vows which those who are now present have understood well; it was at the last step “Our pathology: ‘The vows: not a good friendship (chastity); attachment to money, to the auto...(poverty); the lack of availability for collaboration, spite...(obedience)”²⁷. In the report at the end of my office the report was a bit more extensive; «Of dialogue, of active obedience in trying to find one’s own place which has brought a process of renewal of religious life as a beautiful and human discovery, then one drifts down to an attitude of pretension, of rancour and, even of extortion. Such attitudes render much more difficult the task of the superior. My experience is that with authoritarianism nothing can be attained. It cannot be governed in an imperative way; it is necessary to do it patiently keeping in mind always the persons and their capacity. This way is more difficult. It is necessary to get close to each situation and to each person, the support, stimulus and gradual creation of an environment in which availability will be an ordinary virtue of the religious”²⁸. I know the books, at least in Croatian, in which is drawn up the vow of obedience from different points of view, but I would like to summarize my experiences in the positive and the negative, so as not to say the painful.

4.3.1. *The positive experience*, I will simply call it *availability*. This was expressed in many different ways, not only in direct obedience. These were: collaboration, particularly with the members of the General Government and of the different provincial commissions; then co-responsibility and support, the effort to define the common good of the provincial community at present, respect regarding the office of the Superior, courtesy or politeness in disagreements, etc. In the majority of the friars I have found a form of availability or of good will which for me is synonymous of obedience. .

4.3.2. *The negative experience* is described in the best possible way in the categories of individualistic and egoistic free will. In this I

have found different forms of disobedience, from the easier one to the more serious one. I could list them in the following way: lack of respect in regard to the office of the superior, arrogance in regard to the person of the superior, the constant contempt and the evasion of the prescribed procedure (thus for example, at the end, to some friars, I have written to address themselves to the Provincial Minister, for example for the approbation of projects and of higher expenses), The solutions that followed were exclusively for the personal interest, avoid dialogue, annoyance, stubbornness and resistance, direct disobedience, and even extortion. Such experiences are individual and, fortunately, they are not numerous, but they cause disorder and inequality and ruin fraternal communion.

5. Conclusion

This panorama probably does not correspond fully to the expectations of the one who proposed the theme and of the redactor of *Propositum* because it is too subjective and follows the traces of one's own memory and one's own experience and not an objective research. But let it be accepted as a type of personal witness. I will conclude with some affirmations which I believe they are essential for the value of obedience in the future.

5.1. *To exercise oneself in the art of listening.* The expression 'obedience ('poslušnost') for us, like for many other people, is linked to the verb 'to listen' (slušati). The one who listens to God's voice with a right disposition will also try to do his will. Since the capacity to listen is in crisis today, then obedience is also in crisis".²⁹ Many authors and analysts of society have spoken about the crisis of listening in our noisy civilization in which nobody hears the other and does not truly listens to him. "Social life and the life of faith are in a mysterious reciprocity. The one who does not listen to his neighbour will not listen to God and the one who does not listen to God will not listen to his neighbour.... If many do not listen to one

another, we should begin to listen to others. Thus, beginning ourselves, we will try to create communion of love by means of which the “I-prisoners” can get out of themselves and direct themselves toward “we”³⁰. Let us end with the affirmation of our great Patron Saint Jerome: “Nothing... pleases God more than obedience... which is a unique virtue and the most excellent one” (*Hom. de oboedientia*:: CCL 78,552).

5.2. *The deepening and the Christological foundation of obedience* in our reflection and motivation, in the spirit of Saint Francis is: “the brothers and the sisters, following the example of the Lord Jesus who placed his will in the will of the Father, remind us that out of love for God they have renounced their own will” (*Rule and life of the brothers and of the sisters of TOR of Saint Francis*, 25). The commentator of the concept used by the Council on Consecrated Life will easily agree with Saint Francis: «The Obedience of Christ to the Father, simple and complete, is inserted as a conducting thread throughout the whole Gospel of Saint John. Jesus had nothing which was his own. Everything belonged to the Father: the projects of Jesus, his thoughts, his will, his words and his works. All this is revealed when Jesus as Son was united to the Father with an immense and unique love. Obedience and love are very closely united. And then he quotes the thought of H.U. von Balthasar. «The world was not saved by means of discourses or by the activity of Jesus nor by means of his miracles, but only through his obedience up to death in which Jesus was left alone, abandoned even by the Father”³¹.

5.3. *The knowledge of the Rule and of the Constitutions.* Without a good knowledge of the “principles of spirituality contained in the Rule”,³² it is not possible to be an authentic Franciscan of the Third Order Regular. Commenting on the obedience of the members of the community according to *PC 14, 2* the author says: «In the first place we know that here it is a question of our obedience ‘as prescribed by the Rule and the

Constitutions'. This is very important. Up to the Vatican Council II obedience was exercised in all institutes in the same way more or less. Now, each institute has to determine which is its proper Charism in regard to obedience, that is, which was the will of the founder, and then this was incorporated in the Rule and in the respective Constitutions. This manifests the will of God for an institute. Everything which is not in conformity to the Rule and to the Constitutions does not form part of obedience of religious. We also find this concept in the new Code of Canon Law, and this is the great novelty in regard to the previous Code of Canon Law".³³ Even if the real knowledge that we have is very scarce concerning the new Rule, we can know it from the long and wise discussions on questions which are correctly treated both in the Rule and the Constitutions, and in the General and the Provincial Statutes. Our last Provincial Chapter "discovered" some times that the resolutions that it wanted to formulate were already written in our fundamental documents. For this reason, for example, it decided that the Norm of article 229 of the general Statutes on the reading of the Rule every Friday should be respected and practiced. Will our new documents succeed to get the spirit of the religious enthusiastic and to form new saintly persons as the documents that have existed until now have done?

5.4. *Permanent Formation in obedience.* Of the references given up until now it is clear that growth in the knowledge and in living the vow of obedience never comes to an end. This is why I remember that formation and maturity equally oblige the superior and the subject. "In what concerns obedience, according to the Council, it is not necessary "to see God" in the Superior, because it is not always easy "to see". It suffices and that is psychologically simpler, out of love for God to submit to men, and the sacrifice is equal".³⁴ The superiors as servants of the brothers and of the common good "like all the other friars, they also should try to

discover which is God's will in everything (*Constitution of TOR of Saint Francis*, 117). «A non adequate formation can, in obedience, form types of persons who do not move until someone pushes them, and not only in what concerns obedience but also in all their existence. Such persons have accustomed themselves to work only pushed by the other. They are not aware that... in obedience and side by side with obedience personal initiative is absolutely necessary”.³⁵

In the interesting booklet of Robert Faricy, S.J., “How religious life flourishes” is affirmed that there are three degrees in the development of the Charism of an individual religious institute: the period of time of spontaneity is the time of the first generation and of the founder himself, characterized by docility to the Spirit, by enthusiasm, clarity and commitment that attract and increase the number of the members; then follows the period of time of the norms in which in the place of the initial enthusiasm and spontaneity there is the primacy of the precepts in which there is the desire to include and prescribe the force and strength of the beginning; then follows the period of time of ideology during which there is much discussion and there is Philosophy and the organization and rationalization are stressed. After this period what follows is death or renewal. The author believes that the majority of Orders and Congregations find themselves at present in the ideological period and that the true renewal of the common Charism means the return to the primitive period of a lively community, the return to the period of spontaneity. But the Holy Spirit alone can renew in me and in the Order the Charism of the community;³⁶ therefore, it is necessary to pray for a new Pentecost.

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² Lj. COLIN, *Kult Pravila* (The cult of the Rule), Zagreb 1957, translated from the French and duplicated by the students of TOR; Id. *Kult zavjeta* (*The cult of the vows*). Zagreb 1960, translated from the French and duplicated by the students of TOR.

³ J. MOORMAN, *Novi cvjetici svetoga Franje* (New flowers of Saint Francis), Zagreb 1995, Teovizija, p. 56

⁴ A. RODRIGUEZ, *vježbaj se u savršenosti i krscanskim krepostima*, Rijeka 1905, translated from the Spanish and published by the Capuchin Fathers.

⁵ *Ibid*, Part III, p. 194

⁶ *I. cit.*

⁷ *Suvremeni problemi franjevačke obnove. Zbornik* (Acts), Zagreb 1970, duplicated in the Franciscan Convent of Zagrabiya, Kaptol 9.

⁸ *Ibid*, p. 77

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 84

¹⁰ P. RUNJE, Pokornički pokret i franjevci trecoredci glagoljasi (*XIII-XV st.*) [Movimentzo penitenziale e franciscani glagolite del TOR (XIII-XV centuries)] Zagreb 2001. Biblioteka "Novaja i vethaja", Provincijalat franjevaca trecoredaca e Krscanska sadasnjost, p. 163.

¹¹ Cf. Id., *Pismo vjernicima I* sv. Franje u srednjovjekovnom hrvatskom prijevodu u *Ivancicevu zborniku* ("First letter to the faithful! by Saint Francis un the mideval Croatian translation in the Code of Ivancic), in *Kacic XXV – Zbornik fra Karla Jurisica*, Split 1993., Acta Provinciae SS. Redemptoris OFM in Croatia, pp. 437-448..

¹² Id., *Fra Simun Klimantovic i Konstitucije 1492*, in: *Iskon be slavo* (Acts), Zagreb 2001, Biblioteka Novaja i vethaja, Provincijalat franjevaca trecoredaca e Krscanska sadasnjost, pp. 189-190.

¹³ S. IVANCIC, *Povjestne crte o samostanskom, III. Redu sv. Franje po Dalmaciji, Kvarneru i Istri* (Historical notes on the Third Order Regular of Saint Francis in Dalmatia., Quarnaro and Istria) Zadar 1910, published by the author, p. 196.

¹⁴ I have found five editions in Croatian, three in Latin, two in Italian and one in German.

¹⁵ *De imitatione Christi*, fourth Book, eighth edition, Ratisbone 1957, S. Apost. S. Rituum Congr. Tipographi, Book I, Chapter 9,1; Toma KEMPENAC, *Nasljeduj Krista*, Zagreb 1998., translated and published by Antun Jarm, P. 27.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, Book III, Chapter 13, 1; p. 116

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, Book III, Chapter 13, II, p. 116

¹⁸ S. IVANCIC, *op. .cit*, pp.184-191; Marko JAPUNDZIC, *Juranic, Antun, in;* Hrvatski franjevački biografski leksikon, Zagreb 2010, Leksikoografski zavod Miroslav Krieva e Vijeće franjevačkih zajednica i Bosne i Hercegovine, p. 274.

¹⁹ S, IVANCIC, *op.cit.*, p. 196

²⁰ N. GREGOV, *Skolovanje u Provinciji franjevac trecoredaca glagoljsa* (Instruction in the Province of the Glagolitic Franciscans of the Third Order Regular) Zagreb 1990, Biblioteca Novaja i vethaja, Provincijalat franjevac trecoredaca.

²¹ V. *Analecta TOR*, 1968, 1,71-99; S. BADURINA, *Prema novoj zrelosti* (Towards a new maturity), Zagreb 1989, Krscanska sadasnjost e Provincijalat trecoredaca, pp. 153-177.

²² S. BADURINA, *Putovima obnove Tecega sanostanskog reda svetoga Franje* (on the way of renewal of the Third Order Regular of Saint Francis), Zagreb 1996, Biblioteca Novaja i vethaja, Provincijalat franjevac trecoredaca.

²³ He translated: R. PAZZELLI, *Tau – pokornicki i franjevacki znak* (The Tau – a penitential and Franciscan sign), *Vjesnik franjevac trecoredaca (VFT)*, 18/1981,1,57-61 and L. TEMPERINI, *Duhovnost franjevackog reda od pokore* (The spirituality of the Franciscan Order of penance), *VFT*, 19/1982, 1, 52-59.

²⁴ S. BADURINA, *Prema novoj zrelosti*, p. 221.

²⁵ M. MIJOC, *U procjepu između karizme vlastitoga reda te zahtjeva i potreba vremena* (In the close relation of the Charism of one's Order and between the demands and the need for time), in *Vjesnik dakovacke i srijemske biskupije*, 1998, numbers 2 and 3. He quotes the study of S .BADURINA, very much "The adaptation of religious life to the changing conditions of the times".

²⁶ S.BADURINA, *Prema novoj zrelosti*, p. 169.

²⁷ A.BADURINA, *Slika Provincije 1990*. (The picture of the Province in 1990), *VFT* 27/1990, 2-3,43.

²⁸ Id., *Izvjescje provincijskog ministra o proteklom cetveroljecu* (The report of the Provincial Minister at the end of his mandate), *VFT* 29/1992, 3-4, 105-106.

²⁹ A. NADRAH, *Za Kristom – smisao posvecenog zivota* (To follow Christ – the sense of consecrated life), Zagreb 1991, Konferencija visih redovnickih poglavbara u Jugoslaviji, p. 64.

³⁰ G.MOSER, *Tisina usred buke* (Silence in the midst of uproar, noise). Korcula 1978, Izvori istine, O.P., pp. 59-61

³¹ A.NADRAH, *op.cit.* p. 58.

³² S. BADURINA, *Prema nonoj zrelosti*, pp. 198-2004

³³ A. NADRAH, *op., cit.*, p. 60

³⁴ B.DUDA, *Konciliske teme* (Themes of the Council), Zagreb 1992, Krscanska sadasnjost, p. 199.

³⁵ A.NADRAH, *op., cit.*, p. 61.

³⁶ R.FARICY, *Kako cvjeta redovnickizivot* (How religious life flourishes), Jelsa 1986, Biblioteca "Duh i voda", p. 18.

The Obedience of Love, Becoming a Disturbing Presence, and the Desires of the Hearts of the Young

Sr. Patricia Hutchison

The Challenge

How might an understanding of the vow of obedience in light of the Third Order Regular values of conversion, minority, contemplation, and poverty influence and shape the living of religious life in the twenty-first century? And how might such an understanding of obedience challenge young men and women and invite them to join Third Order Regular members in their quest to become a disturbing presence in today's world? This article examines these questions. The exploration includes some thoughts on the meaning of the vow of obedience in the Third Order Regular tradition; consideration of the IFC-TOR statement of commitment to become a disturbing presence in today's world; and reflection on the San Damiano cross. Next, there is a presentation of findings from two recent studies: a portrait of vocations to religious life since 1993 from the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) and the National Religious Vocation Conference (NRVC), ¹ and the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) findings on the spirituality of college students. ² The article concludes with the suggestion that an understanding of evangelical obedience and the Third Order Regular desire to become a disturbing presence in today's world intersects with the deepest desires of the newest members of religious congregations and other young men and women seeking to discover how they might best choose a vocation which will enable them to live with meaning and purpose. But first, a word about perspective.

One Perspective among Many

Several years ago while ministering as an elementary school principal, I was observing a teacher who was presenting an art lesson on perspective. The classroom in which the lesson was conducted was on the second floor of a two-story building. After introducing the meaning of perspective and offering a few examples, the teacher directed the students to position themselves along the window side of the classroom and draw a cupola which sat atop a one-story building located about fifty yards away. The teacher then instructed the students to draw the same cupola as viewed from several different locations. After thirty minutes, the students returned to their second-floor classroom, displayed their drawings, and discussed the experience. It was obvious that students “got” the idea that “what you see depends upon where you stand.” Furthermore, they grasped the concept that in order to “see” an object, the viewer needs to move around and consider that object from many different angles. That simple classroom lesson has remained with me for more than three decades and has become a powerful metaphor for the importance of perspective.

As I begin this reflection, I recognize that I cannot speak for every North American Third Order Regular religious. My perspective on the vow of obedience and on “becoming a disturbing presence” is shaped by age, family of origin, education, ministry, the charisma of the particular TOR congregation to which I belong, the ministries in which I have been engaged, and a host of other factors too numerous to mention. I write as a member of a Third Order Regular women’s congregation founded in Philadelphia in the mid-nineteenth century. I entered religious life at the age of seventeen in the years immediately following the Second Vatican Council. Service within the religious congregation and at all levels of education has taken me to the eastern and southeastern United States. I now interact daily with undergraduate and graduate university students. These experiences and the voices of those

whom I have encountered along the way shape and, to some extent, limit my reflections.

The “Obedience of Love” in light of the TOR values

The “obedience of love” to which Francis called his followers involves walking faithfully in the footprints of Jesus who identified himself with persons who were poor and oppressed, vulnerable and imprisoned, and who proclaimed a mission to bring the good news of God’s love to all, especially to those on the margins (Luke 2: 14-21). In imitation of Jesus’s example of poverty and humility (Philippians 2: 5-11), such obedience leads us to seek above all to know God’s desires for us and for our world and then to choose to act accordingly. Such obedience requires contemplation, the cultivation of a listening heart which constantly “leans to catch the stirring of the Spirit” (Jessica Powers, “To Live with the Spirit,” stanza 1) and naturally leads to conversion.

The 1996 edition of the Commentary on the Rule and Life of the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular of St. Francis emphasizes that the “framework of evangelical obedience is the brotherhood or sisterhood.”³ Thus, our seeking to know God’s desires for us and for our world requires both individual and communal prayer and discernment. Together we seek, through personal and communal prayer, to know God’s will: together we seek to discern how to respond appropriately. The “obedience of love” requires among the brothers and sisters a commitment to deep prayer and ongoing conversations characterized by mutual respect and openness to the vision and voices of all. Such obedience requires that we “lean to catch the stirring of the Spirit” present in “the world as we know and experience it today.”⁴

The “obedience of love” also frames the manner in which the followers of Francis are to relate to one another and to all people. In the Franciscan tradition, domination and superiority have no place. Rather, each person, regardless of role or position, is

called to assume the attitude of Jesus who bent to wash the feet of his disciples as a powerful witness to the loving service to which all are called.

Becoming a Disturbing Presence in Today's World

What does it mean to be a “disturbing presence” in the manner of Jesus of Nazareth and Francis and Clare of Assisi? Although their lives were separated by twelve centuries, Jesus, Francis and Clare shared much in common. All three “taught” by the manner in which they lived. Although each passed on to their immediate followers and to us words, sermons, and stories, it is mainly their actions which inspire imitation. All three embraced lives of prayer, deliberately seeking ways to balance activity with silence and contemplation. All three gathered around themselves sisters and brothers with whom they shared and shaped their lives, vision, and dreams. All three reached out to those on the margins of their societies. In his/her own way, each stood with those who were victims of injustice, intolerance, or oppression. Each crossed thresholds to promote new ways of thinking and acting. And in the face of violence, each chose to respond in love. One has only to recall stories of encounters with people with “unclean spirits,” sinners, tax collectors, lepers, Samaritans, women, invading Saracens, a wolf in Gubbio, a sultan in Egypt, or the leaders of the Jewish and Roman churches. By the way they lived and spoke, each one challenged the “status quo,” spoke often uncomfortable truths, embraced those whom others forgot, and never stopped loving and forgiving in the process. And all three experienced what Francis would call “perfect joy,” the ability to keep going with hope and confidence even when they were misunderstood and rejected by their own.

In their 2009 commitment statement, the leadership of the IFC-TOR pledged themselves and invited their followers to gaze together and respond in faith and action to a world “disturbed by

the range of social, economic, ecclesial, technological, political and legal challenges.” Ironically, their message challenges their sisters and brothers of the Third Order Regular both to be “disturbed” and to become “disturbing.” Paradoxically, such an invitation is also the path to hope in the midst of a world which may seem hopeless in the face of overwhelming interpersonal division, poverty, war, environmental destruction, abuse in all forms, and betrayal of trust by those in power. Such a call may also be exactly what will attract the imagination, passion, and commitment of today’s young men and women and enkindle the hearts of the newest members to religious communities.

The San Damiano Cross: the “Obedience of love” and the “obedience of Love”

In the introduction to the September 2009 issue of *Propositum*, IFC-TOR president, James Puglisi, SA connects the call to become “a disturbing presence in today’s world” with an understanding of how Francis and Clare encountered Christ. Father Puglisi recalls Francis’s experience before the cross in the dilapidated church of San Damiano and also Clare’s advice to “gaze, consider, and contemplate” Christ. One can only imagine the endless hours that Francis and Clare spent in prayer before this “central Franciscan icon.”⁵ Michael Hubaut, OFM captures what must have impressed Francis on the eventful day on which he saw with new eyes the incarnate Jesus and heard with new ears the call to rebuild God’s house:

The outspread arms and wide-open eyes of the Christos filled Francis’s heart with love, sorrow, and gratitude...This, of course was not the first time that Francis had looked at a crucifix...But that day, Francis was enlightened by the Holy Spirit to see the true face of Christ crucified, a living face of simple but majestic beauty. It struck him that God has a face

and that He looked at our world through human eyes, that he spoke to us in human words.⁶

Ingrid Peterson, OSF asserts the significance of the San Damiano cross in the life of Clare: “Clare’s spirituality reflects the spirit of the San Damiano cross, for it is at once centered upon the crucified Christ of time, whose virtues are to be imitated in the human journey, and the heavenly Jerusalem resplendent in the glory of God.”⁷ It seems appropriate then to reflect upon the San Damiano cross as a visual text connecting obedience in the Franciscan tradition with the IFC-TOR commitment to become a disturbing presence in today’s world.

The 1996 Commentary on the TOR Rule claims that the Gospel of John offers “a profound portrait of the obedience Jesus renders to his ‘Abba’/Father.”⁸ Similarly, Michael Guinan, OFM reminds us that the Gospel of John is the lens through which one can interpret the San Damiano crucifix. In his introduction to Guinan’s study, Joseph Chinnici, OFM encourages meditation “on the icon of the cross through the eyes of Francis’s images and through the overarching themes of John’s own Gospel passion.”⁹ In his explication of the San Damiano cross, Guinan traces the passion narrative beginning with the Last Supper through Jesus’s suffering and death. As Guinan points out, the San Damiano cross, like John’s Gospel, does not end with suffering and death but moves on to the resurrection and ascension and to the recognition of Jesus as the “glory of God” in our midst.¹⁰ The San Damiano cross also depicts, as Guinan explains, the inclusive community of faith which Jesus gathered around himself. In his introduction to Guinan’s work, Chinnici notes the uniqueness of the emphasis in the Franciscan spiritual tradition on the “new family of Christ,” a fraternity of friends – “male and female, Jew and Gentile, single and married, old and young, well placed and lowly, invited together into the very life of God.”¹¹ Chinnici suggests that the community of equals depicted around the cross of Jesus could be established only by “a love

willing to give itself for others.”¹² Thus, the San Damiano cross exemplifies the obedience of the one whose name is Love.

In his book *Finding Francis, Following Christ*, Michael Crosby, OFM Cap recapitulates Guinan’s interpretation of the San Damiano cross in light of John’s gospel. Crosby resonates with Guinan’s suggestion that Francis viewed all of creation as God’s house and all creatures as members of the same household.¹³ Crosby asserts that the house which Francis was invited to rebuild includes “the ‘house’ of one’s self, our transactions with each other, our way of relating to others, and indeed, to creation itself.”¹⁴ Although it may certainly be argued that repairing and rebuilding may be welcomed by some, Francis’s actions disturbed many in Assisi. Indeed, the presence of one who dares to suggest that something or someone is in need of repair is often perceived as “disturbing.”

Connecting with the Questions and Dreams of the Young (and not so young)

A Study of New Members to Religious Life in 2008, the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) and the National Religious Vocation Conference (NRVC) conducted a study to “to identify and understand the characteristics, attitudes, and experiences of the men and women who are coming to religious life today as well as the characteristics and practices of the religious institutes that are successfully attracting new candidates and retaining new members.”¹⁵ The study focused on women and men currently in formation programs and those who had professed a final commitment within their religious congregations since 1993.

Although the results were not disaggregated according to congregational charism, it is reasonable to assume that the findings apply to Third Order Regular women and men. Despite their diversity in terms of age, racial and ethnic background, and life experience, the participants in the study tended to agree on the major factors which initially attracted them to religious life and

continue to sustain them in their commitment: individual and communal prayer and community living. In addition, respondents expressed a preference for ministering with members of the same congregation and/or in sponsored ministries of their congregations. Furthermore, new members valued the sense of having a “common purpose and being part of something bigger than themselves.”¹⁶ According to the CARA study, many new members appreciate “the spiritual dimension of religious life such as following God’s call.”¹⁷ Respondents also identified the value of service and outreach to others, including the sense of “being a witness to God and others.” In the words of one new member:

I find most rewarding our truly deep desire to seek God together and what it is God is calling us to in this time and place. I find deeply satisfying our communal desire to reach out to those in need among us and the joy of having the opportunity to do that together.¹⁸

A Study of Spirituality and College Students

In 2003, the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) initiated a study to investigate the impact of the college experience on the spiritual and religious growth of students. The study reflects the experience of 14,527 students from 136 colleges and universities throughout the United States. Results of the study affirm that spirituality is essential to students’ lives. Over two-thirds of the students surveyed indicated that they value the spiritual dimension of their lives and welcome the opportunity to discuss spirituality and questions of meaning and purpose. Among the practices valued by students and considered worthwhile in promoting emotional, psychological and spiritual well-being are: engagement with diverse peoples, cultures, and ideas; involvement in service to others; meditation and self-reflection; and occasions to examine “big questions” connected to meaning and purpose. Although the HERI study was not directed

toward Catholic students or students who had indicated an interest in religious life, the results suggest that the current generation of young women and men values silence and time for reflection. The UCLA research confirms that today's young people, who often appear "plugged in" and disinterested in face-to-face communication, actually desire to share their questions, aspirations, and dreams with others. Likewise, the study supports the importance of what Sharon Daloz Parks describes as "encounters with otherness" which are, she asserts, "the most powerful sources of vital, transforming questions that open ways of making meaning that can form and sustain commitment to the common good."¹⁹ According to Parks, "Faith develops at the boundary with otherness, when one becomes vulnerable to the consciousness of another, and thus vulnerable to reimagining self, other, world, and 'God'."²⁰

Conclusion

The newest members of religious congregations within the United States today yearn for spaces in which deep prayer, both personal and communal, will be nourished. They desire to live and minister with women and men who value community and who make time for meaningful relationships. They yearn to serve others, especially those who are most vulnerable. They want to discern with others how to identify and follow God's call.

Traditional age college students, who are still trying to discern what direction their lives should take, also yearn for time to reflect and to ponder. They welcome the challenge of "big questions." They long for dreams that are worthy of the unique lives they wish to invest. And they seek mentors who will help them to find meaning and purpose.

For such persons the concept of obedience as humble love which bends to wash the feet of brothers and sisters is appealing. The concept of obedience which involves searching together for a common purpose and a common direction is engaging. The concept

of obedience which is mutual and reciprocal provides meaning and purpose.

For the newest members to religious life and for young persons already disturbed by much that they see and experience in the world around them, the possibility of joining with others to actually make a difference is energizing. And for a younger generation somewhat bereft of meaningful symbols, the San Damiano cross is a potent visual reminder of the healing power of Love. Such young women and men may be simply waiting for the invitation to

discover more about this God of Love,
proclaim more of Love's Good News,
protect and care for more of Creation,
be in relationship with more of our sisters and brothers around the
world,
and understand more about their struggles for justice, their longings
for peace,
and the pathways they journey.²¹

¹ The study on *Recent Vocations to Religious Life: A Report to the National Religious Vocation Conference*, 2009, is available at www.NRVC.com

² The results of the HERI study will be published in a forthcoming book by Alexander W. Astin, Helen S. Astin, and Jennifer A. Lindholm, *Cultivating the Spirit: How College Can Enhance Students' Inner Lives* (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 2010). Information about the study is available at <http://spirituality.ucla.edu/>

³ *Rule and Life of the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular of St. Francis*, American-English Commentary by Margaret Carney, OSF and Thaddeus Horgan, SA (Washington, DC: Franciscan Federation, 1997).

⁴ IFC-TOR statement available in *Propositum*, Vol. 12, No. 1, September 2009, available at <http://www.ifc-tor.org/pub-en-prop2009-09.htm>

⁵ Michael D. Guinan, *The Franciscan Vision and the Gospel of John* (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 2006), 2.

⁶ Michael Hubaut, "Christ our Joy: Learning to Pray with St. Francis and St. Clare," *Greyfriars Review* 9 Supplement (1995): 17-18.

⁷ Ingrid J. Peterson, *Clare of Assisi: A Biographical Study* (Quincy, IL: Franciscan Press, 1993), 291.

⁸ *Commentary on the Rule and Life*, 65.

⁹ *The Franciscan Vision and the Gospel of John*, vi.

¹⁰ *The Franciscan Vision and the Gospel of John*, 17.

¹¹ *The Franciscan Vision and the Gospel of John*, viii-ix.

¹² *The Franciscan Vision and the Gospel of John*, ix.

¹³ Michael H. Crosby, *Finding Francis, Following Christ* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2007), 51.

¹⁴ Crosby, 54.

¹⁵ *Recent Vocations to Religious Life*, 4.

¹⁶ *Recent Vocations to Religious Life*, 97.

¹⁷ *Recent Vocations to Religious Life*, 97.

¹⁸ *Recent Vocations to Religious Life*, 98.

¹⁹ Sharon Daloz Parks, *Big Questions: Worthy Dreams* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000), 139.

²⁰ Parks, 141.

²¹ Adapted from Margaret Eletta Guider, OSF, "The Canticle of Disturbing Presence," *Propositum*, September 2009.

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The vow of obedience in African Cultures: A challenge for young men and women in the world: That we may become a disturbing presence in our world today.

Sr. Loice Kashangura, FMSA

Introduction

Despite the many challenges facing religious life today, it remains an attractive way of life to both women and men from a wide range of cultures, ages and socio-economic backgrounds. However, many find it difficult to comprehend how a young person can make a life choice to have no personal property or spouse. In the African contexts, generally, the concept of 'obedience' does not seem to be as challenging as the other two. This is partly because obedience to elders/authority is integral to the life of African communities. We, however acknowledge that the actual living out of religious obedience is as challenging to African religious just as it is for other religious men and women from other contexts. The difficulty in embracing obedience may not only be due to the human need for expressing personal autonomy, but also arising from a limited understanding of the vow. Interestingly, some people still put so much emphasis on the human aspect of obedience (obeying another human being) while forgetting the purpose of that obedience (obedience for participation in the mission of Christ as depicted in the words, "Here I am, I am coming to do your will, O God." Heb 10:7).

In this paper, therefore, we shall briefly look at the place of obedience in the African family/community and relate this to religious obedience. We acknowledge that obedience and respect are inseparable hence the need to affirm the place of respectable authority figures in African communities. We will also argue that the vow of obedience, by virtue of its Christian context, implies an undeniable universality that invites our discussion, not only to

highlight the value of obedience in African contexts, but also to emphasise the common Christian challenge to service.

Respect and Obedience: Indispensable values for responsible and socially compliant citizens

In African societies, obedience is associated with listening and helps to regulate behaviour, that is, it helps form individuals to behave in ways that create an ordered environment. It is for this reason that every culture contains a large number of guidelines that direct conduct in particular situations. The *Shona*¹ culture, for example, has taboos (avoidance rules) in order to control, guide and regulate the behaviour of its members.² Obeying authority is therefore fundamental in our social system hence respect for elders and authority is greatly valued. It is, therefore, for this reason that societies introduce children to these values in their early socialisation in the family where authority figures are in place. It suggests that when children internalise the value of respect and obedience in the home, they make better students and they are more accepting of discipline in their lives. Parents teach children the importance of respect and obedience because there are usually some consequences associated with respect and obedience. While 'consequences' may point to rewards, such as blessings when one respects and obeys their parents, we acknowledge that the notion of 'consequences' may also imply an element of fear involved in learning these values. Fear of misfortunes such as illnesses, deformities or death, which are believed to befall those who deviate from societal values, may become catalysts in helping people to conform to societal expectations. Interestingly, such fears continue to influence people's conformity to obedience in many African societies despite the influence of modern education, which tends to undermine traditional understanding of the value of obedience. It is argued that in times of crisis, people tend to resort to their traditional beliefs.³ In crisis situations, therefore, people ask questions about their relationships with one another, with the living

and the dead. This is one area in which notions of obedience/disobedience especially to elders/authorities surface.

Among *Bantu* cultures across Africa, this acceptance of discipline goes beyond one's household to accepting every elder and authority as respectable and worthy of correcting. Thus the African maxim, "It takes a village to raise a child". The 'village' context suggests that people are linked together by mutual need and a common desire for an environment where nurture and discipline are possible. The communal aspect intimated here, therefore, validates the authority of every elder (as a parent/advisor) in African communities; hence one can be reprimanded not only by one's biological parents, but by any elder in the community. This affirms a fundamental truth about our social nature as humans, hence the notion of interdependence, which implies an awareness of our limitations and insufficiency as persons which make us aware of our need for others.⁴ This suggests that interdependence in society is a necessary ideal even though it often eludes us.

Obedience for Mission: The universality of Religious Obedience

We cannot downplay the fact that Jesus' total obedience to God is an indispensable aspect of the Christian life. It follows that His obedience to God has implications in the Christian's life. It is the same obedience to which all Christians are called regardless of race or culture. It can, therefore, be argued that our Christian faith, if authentic, is concretised in our obedience by renouncing our personal autonomy for the sake of Christ who continually calls us for mission. This mission, for Arbuckle and Fleming, "remains a sending out with the Gospel message through an obedience to one's vocation as Christian."⁵ It is for this universality of the Christian call that we can understand the arguments of one Zimbabwean Franciscan Friar who maintains that particularising the essence of religious vows is a denial of our common Christian call.

This challenges us to draw from the wealth of the African understanding of obedience to appreciate religious obedience. It follows that an African young woman or man, if attentive to their cultural traditions, can readily accept the authority of their religious leaders and elders in the religious life.

One area that raises questions among aspirants to religious life is the fear of vertical line of authority-obedience which emphasizes the exalted role of the superior as the sole decision-maker and discerner of God's will. Such a model can be unattractive for it is clearly devoid of participation from the members and is gradually giving way to a more life-giving model characterised by dialogue and mutual respect. Religious life has embraced a communitarian approach in discovering the will of God which allows members to exercise their maturity in discovering ways of responding to God's call in their day-to-day encounter with humanity and the rest of creation. Unfortunately many religious communities still operate from the vertical model of authority and this makes discernment difficult for young, educated women and men who may be contemplating joining religious life.

Concluding Remarks

We affirm that respect and obedience are inseparable for there is an allegiance to the individual one respects. This suggests that when we respect someone, we will obey them. Obedience here does not point to submitting to one due to fear of punishment. Rather, it is a matter of respect. There is an underlying belief that a person who has earned our respect will not ask us to do something wrong hence they have earned the right to tell us what to do without abusing their power. It is on the basis of respect that we see the relevance of obedience in society, hence in religious life. The vow of obedience, therefore, can be a source of inspiration for young people in our world today for it affirms respectful and attentive listening to God. As O' Murchu clearly states, obedience in

religious life also calls us to listen “to others, to life’s circumstances, to nature, to the many calls of daily living, and to respond in a manner that enhances growth.”⁶

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¹ *Shona* is the name collectively given to several groups of people (Bantu) in Zimbabwe and southern Mozambique. The Shona people speak a range of related dialects whose standardized form is also known as Shona.

² Chigidi, W. L., “Shona Taboos: The Language of Manufacturing Fears for Sustainable Development” in *The Journal of Pan African Studies*, 3, 1 (2009) 175.

³ Chigidi, W. L., “Shona Taboos: The Language of Manufacturing Fears for Sustainable Development” in *The Journal of Pan African Studies*, 3, 1 (2009) 184.

⁴ Cencini A. and Manenti A., *Psychology and Formation* (Bombay: Daughters of St. Paul, 1992) 21.

⁵ Gerald A. Arbuckle and David L. Fleming, *Religious Life: Rebirth through Conversion* (New York: Alba House, 1990) 29.

⁶ O’ Murchu D., *Religious Life A Prophetic Vision* (Notre Dame, Indiana: Ave Maria Press, 1991) 142.

A New Look at Consecrated Obedience

Mathew M. Vallipalam o.f.m. Cap.

Meaning and Understanding

The vow of obedience is the most discussed and studied theme in the religious sphere. It has the deep theological and ecclesial foundation. Like the other two vows obedience is based upon the example and teaching of Christ. The meaning and understanding of consecrated vow of obedience has changed drastically after the Second Vatican Council.

Religious are called to listen to God as He speaks, communicates, reveals himself in the Scripture, in the teaching of the Church, in the constitutions of the Institute, in the signs of the times and in conscience. Mother Teresa in her reflections on the “Consecrated Woman and Mission”, says, “We are also called to share in the obedient listening of Christ to all manifestations of the will of His Father in people, events and things. This obedience implies our readiness with Christ to say “Yes Father” at every moment that it becomes clear to us what His Will is.”¹ In this context Mother Teresa was not disobedient to her former Congregation, but when God’s will was revealed to her she left the first one and established a new Congregation only for the poor, needy and unwanted, and that was the most needful thing in Calcutta at that time. In other words, she was moving from the comfortable state to a most disturbing state. It is not who say, “Lord, Lord, that will enter the Kingdom of heaven, but those who do the will of my Father” (Mt. 7:21).

The unparalleled element in Christ’s life and his ministry was neither his virginity nor his poverty, but his obedience. “For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me...” (Jn.6:38). According to Wittberg obedience is “an attitude of openness to the providential plan of God”, a “life lived with alertness to the spirit”, a “search for God’s will and its realization in ever newer forms,” a “means to develop as an adult” or even “the actualization of one’s own destiny.”² In this respect

obedience primarily understood as fidelity. To be obedient requires that one uses one's capacities that one creates. Moreover, being obedient calls for contemplation and continued conversion.³ Karl Rahner has defined religious obedience as "the acceptance of common mode of religious life in imitation of Christ, according to a constitution which the Church has acknowledged to be true and practical expression of a divinely oriented existence."⁴

The Second Vatican Council reminds the religious the observance of obedience, "...in a spirit of faith and of love for God's will, let religious show humble obedience to their superiors in accord with the norms of rule and constitution" (L.G. 14). By taking the vow of obedience consecrated people enter into partnership with a particular Institute to honestly search out the will of God for themselves as individuals and for the Institute as a whole. According to O'Murchu obedience in its true Biblical sense is not about subjecting one's will to another, but utilizing our God-given resources to listen more profoundly to divine wisdom, so that we can discern God's will more authentically.⁵ Obedience to God is often directed through human entities that serve as intermediaries such as "the Rule, the superiors, the community, the signs of the times, the expectations of others and above all, the poor."⁶

Historical Background

It is difficult to say exactly when the life of the anchorites and cenobites took on a definite character of obligation toward God and the Church. In the 4th and 5th centuries took the form of an oath among the Benedictines, the object of which was threefold and included obedience. In the 7th century the Benedictines promised God to obey his abbot by a *pactum* which was a real vow. The true monastic vow came into being at the end of the 8th century.⁷ In the 12th century the triad of poverty, celibacy and obedience was established which gave definitive shape to this signal realization of the *sequel Christi*.⁸

The first Monks who with St. Antony gave up all to follow Christ obedience was practiced little by little on a very exalted spiritual value. For to surrender one's will is indeed in the highest degree to live oneself up and it is an act of supreme liberty. In the 13th century St. Francis of Assisi stressed on Biblical obedience which is evangelical in spirit and juridical in character. He wished submission to authority – Pope and the ministers and demanded the good of the Church itself.⁹

The most highly developed treatments of obedience come out of the tradition of Ignatius for effective cooperation with the saving work of Christ. He specified his adherence to Christ through a vow of direct observance to the Pope and posited three degrees of obedience: 1) when we do what we are commanded, 2) when we do what we are commanded willingly, and 3) when we conform our own judgment to that of our superior so that we share in his judgment.¹⁰

Obedience and Authority

The idea of obedience always needs another symmetrical, that of authority and there would be good reasons in logic for treating it here. However, unless the principle of authority is established one would appear to be speaking in a vacuum when discussing religious obedience. First let us see obedience and authority in the Indian tradition and then we will see it in Christian view point.

Indian tradition. Family system in India is entirely different from the Western countries. It has greater cohesion and greater continuity. In spite of several wide-ranging changes in Indian society, the families in India continue to be joint, partially structured and it is not disintegrated into individual families like the Western countries.¹¹ The entire authority is in the hands of the father in the patriarchal families and all have to obey him. In the same way in the matriarchal families mother holds the authority and she dominates

the whole family.¹² However, the patriarchal families are still quite common in India.

India is a country of religious pluralism. She has a population of more than one billion of whom around 85% are Hindus, 10% Muslims, 2.5% Christians and the rest follow Sikhism, Buddhism, Jainism, etc. There is a wide spirit of religious tolerance and peaceful co-existence among the various religious groups, though bitter tensions and conflicts arise now and then.¹³ Indian culture is giving high value in respecting and obeying the parents and the elders of the family.

There is no formal vow of obedience in Buddhism. During the initial formation the candidates have to obey their elders. The early part of the formation the candidates organized themselves in such a way that they were subject neither to a single leader or a council.¹⁴

Unlike Christian monastic Buddhist monastic are not required a life of obedience to a superior. However, it is expected that monastic will offer respect to senior members of the Sanga.¹⁵ The Buddha did not specify rules mandating obedience in the monastic code. Individual groups of monastic are expected to make decision collectively through regular gatherings of the community, at which decisions regarding violations of monastic rules and the dispositions of common property are to be made. They had no formal positions. A senior monastic is usually responsible for the daily administration of the monastery. In some traditions the superior is chosen by a vote of the monastic in a monastery. In Thailand the superior is chosen by the lay-community.¹⁶

O'Murchu observes that the superiors in religious life are almost unknown in Hinduism and Buddhism. The central figure of the Hindu Ashrams, the Buddhist Sanga and the Sufi Schools of Islam is a guru or spiritual father. He has nothing to do with administrative work. His main responsibility is to enable and empower the candidates who want to become Monk so that he would be able to respond creatively to the divine will. But at present many of these gurus manipulate and exploit those entrusted to their care. In this

regard the Eastern monastic systems have much to learn from the Western monasticism. He writes, "For the vow of obedience the primary archetypal characteristic is respectful and attentive listening to God, to other, to life's circumstances, to nature, to the many call of daily living and to respond in a manner that enhances growth."¹⁷

Christian Tradition. In the past, the virtue of religious obedience was explained as a complete willingness to do the will of the superior and he did not generally expected for the feedback of the members of the community. But, today superiors are known as facilitators or animators not for controlling or commanding but for helping. The bond of obedience should be formed with the greatest freedom and that obedience should be exercised as far as possible on one's own responsibility. It does not mean the slavishness of one's own will, but it is more perfect adaptations of self realization. Ascetical and educational obedience are in the service of self perfection and functional obedience in the service of the community. They are complementary not opposed to each other.¹⁸ A recent document says, "Obedience to God is the path of growth and, therefore, of freedom for the person because this obedience allows for the acceptance of a plan or a will different from one's own that not only does not deaden or lessen human dignity but is its basis. At the same time, freedom is also in itself a path of obedience because it is in obeying the plan of the father, in a child like way, that the believer fulfills his or her freedom."¹⁹ The scripture reveals that obedience to God is very often directed through human beings because of the Divine intervention religious authority is considered as spiritual authority. This can be expressed by mutual trust, dialogue, sharing and co-responsibility. The ideal of religious life is carried out with particular attention and emphasis on certain points. St. Francis of Assisi the founder of Franciscan Order did not want to make a rule for his followers but when the members

increased in the Order he was forced to make a written rule. There can be no rule without authority.

Obedience demands great prudence, wisdom, humility, love and impartiality in a superior. He/she is a channel of God's word more than in the process of leading and guiding the members. The consultation is meant to be a help but it can easily become mechanical and legalistic in the hands of immature and weak superiors. Therefore, Vatican Second has reminded us renewing the constitutions of the Institutes on the basis of returning to the sources of Christian life and inspiration of the founder/foundress and adjusting and adapting according to the current situations.²⁰

Very often the term obedience is used as mere submissiveness to power and might but it is an exercise of freedom, both the point of view of God and of the goal of the Institute. It is the highest expression of freedom because it is the free submission for the cause of the kingdom. Freedom is not doing what one feels like doing but becoming what one meant to be. It is to respond to God's creative, loving presence with in the consecrated people, His mission and plans. Some rules are needed to live harmoniously in a community. They have nothing to do with obedience but it is concerned with the ministry.²¹ Therefore, the obedience to religious life is not loss of their freedom but a voluntary commitment to a higher goal.

Signs of the Times

Vatican officials felt that during the period immediately before the Second Vatican Council many religious experienced a style of obedience which they "felt as being too rigid and authoritarian."²² Personal opinion was rarely solicited and initiative seldom encouraged. A complaint of too much obedience was heard and distrust of personal authority became wide spread.²³ The love of obedience is now less connected to questions of command and control and is increasingly less focused on leaders. Today it is

discussed more in terms of the root concept underlying the word listening.

Obedience is a call to fidelity and loyalty to the creative God who invites us all to be co-creators in building a better world for all organic life. Fidelity of conscience makes us people who are committed to God and open to the world. It makes us resist every attempt to exercise control and domination over us. It does not prevent us from listening to the community and its leader from accepting the advice of a brother or a sister or from learning from anyone who can teach us. In the last analysis we have to follow our conscience and act accordingly.

Mutual discernment has prime importance in obedience. Therefore, obedience is a call to discernment over which no one authority has a monopoly. Today in a more democratic age community members participate in decision-making process. Much consultation and dialogue take place before assent is asked and given. While some think that this new approach to obedience weakens religious authority, others see it as the best way to proceed where the decision reached will affect their lives.

In the past obedience has prevented many religious from becoming adults who are capable of making decision for themselves and taking responsibility for their life and mission it has often been used to suppress freedom and to establish structures of domination and oppression. We have been taught that it is a virtue to be submissive to those in authority even when they abuse it. Adult obedience is the attitude and behavior of a spiritually mature person towards God and the world.²⁴

In her historical survey of monasticism and religious orders Wittberg makes some relevant observations on understanding of religious obedience. The old model of subjugation to a religious superior is "false and naïve," she says. The new interpretation accentuate that obedience is "an attitude of openness to the providential plan of God", a "life lived with alertness to the spirit", a "search for God's will and its realization in ever newer forms," a "means of develop as

an adult” or even “the actualization of one’s own destiny.” Today obedience is focused on participation, consultation, subsidiarity and discernment. In many Institutes the co-responsibility has gone full circle, culmination with a superior who is entrusted with so much. Obedience requires a radical and attentive openness to the deeper message and meaning of all that we are asked to attend to. O’ Murchu gives a new name to obedience as the vow for mutual collaboration. It requires mutuality as a central feature of all its interactions.²⁵

Turcotte, another noted scholar observes that the signs of the times were given equal or even greater weight than the dictates of the community’s superiors in revealing the will of God in one’s personal life.²⁶ According to Burns the former belief in the divine origin of communal authority was de-emphasized and a superior is a public servant rather than an infallible representative of God. He describes how the new constitutions of the Institutes reduced the religious superior to being a board functionary; she was to be subject to the obedience.²⁷ Casey puts it very well, “To be obedient demands that one uses all of one’s capacities that one creates. Being obedient also calls for contemplation and continued conversion.”²⁸

Conclusions

The concept and application of obedience in consecrated life has undergone a profound change in the last few decades. All are affected with this change, both those in authority and the members. The institutional model of consecrated life was dominated in the past. When this model prevails the members lose their interest and enthusiasm for initiative and creativity they become more passive. Authority is held accountable to give reasonable defense of its positions the personal responsibility of each one becomes very important. Consecrated obedience is based on the conviction that the Holy Spirit moves both the community as a whole and each member to respond to the will of God with faith and generosity. Though Church is not a democratic organization the

democratization of consecrated life is a reality today. In this milieu consultation, dialogue, shared responsibility for making and carrying out decisions as well as evaluations of their consequences are all part of the practice of obedience.²⁹ The radical surrender of the entire life of intellect and will to God within the religious community remains the undisputed core of the religious commitment. This commitment must lead to the unfolding of the human personality not of its oppression. Consecrated people are adult disciples. The future religious want to embrace the obedient adults to build up the kingdom of God.

¹ Mother Teresa of Calcutta, "Women Religious and Mission", *Omnis Terra* 37(2003), 408.

² Patricia Wittberg, *The Rise and Fall of Catholic Religious Orders: A Social Movement Perspective* (Albany/New York: State University of New York Press, 1994), 243.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Karl Rahner, "Reflections on Obedience", *Cross and Currents* 10(1960), 371.

⁵ Diarmuid O'Murchu, *The Changing Paradigms* (Bombay: Claretian Publications, 2006), 74.

⁶ Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated life and Societies of Apostolate, "The Service of Authority and obedience", *L'Osservatore Romano* 13/20 (2008), no. 11.

⁷ Elio Gambari, *The Global Mystery of Religious Life* (New Delhi: Society of St. Paul, 1974), 123, foot note no. 1.

⁸ Karl Rahner, ed., *Sacramentum Mundi: An Encyclopedia of Theology, Vol. II*, (Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 1978), 277- 278

⁹ Antony Barnabas Monis, *Religious Consecration* (Mysore: Dhyavanava Publications, 2005), 117.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*,

¹¹ K.L.Sharma, *Indian Society* (New Delhi: National Council of Educational research and Training 11th print, 2000), 81-82.

¹² Ram Ahuja, *Indian Social System* (Jaipur/New Delhi: Rowat Publications, 1993), 26.

¹³ Mathew M. Vallipalam, "The Impact of Consecrated life on Indian Society", *Social Compass* 48(2001), 264.

¹⁴ Austin B. Creel and Vasudha Narayan, *Monastic life in the Christian and Hindu Traditions: A Comparative Study* (Virginia: Edwin Mellen Press, 1990), 7.

¹⁵ Sanga is a Sanskrit word meaning a community of people who support each other's spiritual growth.

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- ¹⁶ Austin B. Creel and Vasudha Narayan, *op.cit.*
- ¹⁷ Diarmuid O’Murchu, *op.cit.*, 145.
- ¹⁸ Karl Rahner, ed., *Sacramendum Mundi, Vol. IV*, p.240.
- ¹⁹ Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, “The Service of Authority in Obedience,” *L’Osservatore Romano* 13/20 (2008), Special Insert.no.5
- ²⁰ Vatican Council II, “Decree on the Appropriate Renewal of the Religious Life,” *The Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Walter M. Abbott, S.J. (London: Western Publishing Company, Inc., (1966), no. 2
- ²¹ Joseph Mattam, *Religious Life: Within a Christian Vision of Reality*, (Gujarat: Gujarat Sahithya Prakash, 1994), 96-100.
- ²² Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated life and Societies of Apostolic life, *Fraternal Life in Community*, (Rome: Vatican, 1994), no. 48.
- ²³ Basil Cole O.P. and Paul Conner O.P., *Christian Totality: Theology of the Consecrated Life*, (Bombay: St. Paul’s Publications, 1997), 170-171
- ²⁴ Kurian Kunnumparam, “The Prophetic Dimension of Religious life”. In *Shaping Tomorrow’s Church* (ed.), Kurian Kunnumparam, (Mumbai: St. Paul Society, 2006), 399.
- ²⁵ Diarmuid O’Murchu, *Poverty, Celibacy and Obedience: A Radical option for Life*, (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1999), 88.
- ²⁶ Turcotte Paul-Andre, *Les Chemins de la Difference* (Montreal: Les editions Bellarmin, (1985), 132
- ²⁷ Burns Gene, *The Frontiers of Catholicism: The politics of Ideology in a Liberal World*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 142
- ²⁸ Julianna Casey, “Towards a Theology of Vows,” ed., Carol Quigley (Westminister/Md.: Christian Classics, Inc.), 78-126
- ²⁹ Antony Barnabas Monis, *op.cit.* 119.

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