

*Fr. Perozich comments —*

*This may inform you, lay readers, more than us, my brother priests, regarding the hierarchical structure in the church. The bishops have much control over the whole diocese, including each priest, his assignment (whether or not he gets one), his faculties, his compensation, and most of the aspects of the priest's life, save the priest's soul and his conscience.*

*While a priest might claim conscience as his ultimate authority, it comes with consequences.*

*In these past 5 years, priests have been removed or asked for resignations from Vatican congregations, USCCB committees, diocesan work, parish work, by bishops including the bishop of Rome. Others have been told that they are causing disunity among the presbyterate, and have been taken out of assignment. Some have been silenced in preaching and writing. Others have been told to go for psychological evaluations.*

*Just read on to see how priests can be sidelined if they do not tow the line of their bishop.*

*The oddity here is that priests liberal in theology who are homophiles seem to get a hands off approach and continue in ministry and sophistry. Those who teach the traditional seem to be more the ones who are “disciplined” and whose teachings are called not Catholic.*

*So when you complain about why father does not speak against the evils of the day such as abortion, same sex marriage, homosexuality, adultery, open borders, gun control, socialism and so forth, know that your priest may already have been called in by the bishop with an explicit or implied “vacation” from ministry, possibly a one way ticket.*

# PRIESTLY OBEDIENCE: WHAT IT IS AND WHAT IT ISN'T



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## Fr. Jeffrey Robideau explains

To understand obedience, I think it best to look at it from God's perspective. After all, obedience is first owed to Him before all others. Scripture has much to say about the obedience that God expects from us. We hear that obedience is justice and that obedience is better than sacrifice and other such things, but the obligation to be obedient is shown most beautifully in the Fourth Commandment: Thou shalt honor thy father and thy mother.

As children this law of God's is very clear, we must respect and obey our parents. Is this all God has in mind, or does He have a bigger meaning or purpose? God's goal is our salvation, and part of our salvation is obedience to His law.

With this now in mind, we can see that obedience to parents is the beginning of obedience to God. Our parents have the duty to teach us to be obedient unto them and to those in legitimate authority in this world. They are further to punish us when we fail so that we understand the consequences of disobedience.

As a child gets older and his faith develops, he then transfers his obedience to God with the understanding that to disobey God will bring grave consequences, the like of which his parents could never inflict. This obedience to God does not replace the Fourth Commandment. That is to say that once we transfer our understanding of obedience to parents to obedience to God, one does not get to then disregard ones obedience to parents and legitimate authorities on earth.

As the child gets even older, this servile sense of "obey or get punished" gives way to a filial respect for authority. This can only come about if there is trust and trust can only come about if those in authority have not abused their authority and this includes the parents. When one has a good experience of human authority, they will come to understand that those in authority only want what is best and are looking out for everyone's best interest.

Unfortunately, so many take advantage of their power and lord it over others as a way to get what they want no matter the consequences to others. As a result, people have a bad experience of authority and so do not trust those with power. This also translates into our experience of God and our willingness to obey Him.

The gift of the Holy Spirit, fear of the Lord, has two degrees. The first is the servile fear, which is to be afraid, like a servant (slave) fears his master. At this level, we come to obey God only because we fear the pains of Hell. The second degree is filial fear,

which is that trusting love of another like that of a child toward his parents. It is not fearful, but because of the love and trusting bond between them, it is respectful and submissive.

So great can this filial sense of obedience become that it will not only look to what is commanded of him, but will gladly submit to a request, suggestion or even a perceived preference of the superior. This loving obedience says in its heart, your every wish is my command. This depth of obedience will be ever attentive to the superior and will seek to know and fulfill even what is not spoken but is only perceived to be their desire.

So great can this filial sense of obedience become that it will not only look to what is commanded of him, but will gladly submit to a request, suggestion or even a perceived preference of the superior.

This degree of obedience also translates into our obedience to God. In fact, it is this type of obedience that is the very definition of perfection that Jesus calls us to when He says, "Be ye perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect."

Jesus himself practiced this degree of obedience when He went home after being lost for three days. Scripture tells us that He was obedient and grew in age and wisdom. Jesus was obedient to His mother when He made the water into wine. And still again when He said to the Father, "Your will, not Mine be done."

**Now, let us turn to what obedience of the priest to his bishop means.**

Canon law no. 273 says, "Clerics have a special obligation to show reverence and obedience to the Supreme pontiff and to their own Ordinary" — ordinary means bishop in this case.

The commentary I have on this canon says "other areas of private life, even spiritual ones, do not come within the scope of the cleric's canonical obedience but enjoy lawful autonomy."

In other words, the priest is not the bishop's slave. Even still, they owe him a certain degree of deference. He is the bishop of the diocese and so is the one with the vision and direction in which he believes is best for it and the people of God.

Even still, the bishop is limited in his vision by the Magisterium, Faith, Scripture, Tradition, canon law, customs and the like. He does not get to do whatever he likes. He further cannot demand that anyone, even a priest, do that which is evil, immoral, illegal or contrary to their informed conscience or their human dignity. In fact, no one in authority should do such things.

This is not to say that the bishop does not have a lot of control over his priests, because he does, and he should. When a man submits to the laying on of hands by the bishop that makes him a priest, he understands that he has certain obligations that he must fulfill. This is a moral obligation because he knows the obligations and commitment he is making when he freely and willingly chose to be made a priest. It is a contract, a moral contract.

Some of this contract is spelled out in canon law, numbers 273–289. There are others as well laid out in canon law.

In these canons, the Church spells out many obligations like: obedience to the bishop; building up of the brotherhood of the priesthood; to promote the mission of the laity; to seek holiness; to fulfill their pastoral ministry; to pray the liturgy of the hours; make retreats; mental prayer; honor the Virgin Mother of God; perfect and perpetual continence for the sake of the kingdom, and are therefore bound to celibacy; behave with due prudence in relation to persons whose company can be a danger to their

obligations or can lead to scandal; to not be a part of organizations that would hinder their ministry or give scandal; to continue their sacred studies even after ordination; they are to hold to solid doctrine; they are to avoid profane novelties and pseudo-science; they are to follow a simple way of life and avoid anything which smacks of worldliness; they are limited by particular law on how much time they can spend away from the parish or be out of the diocese; they are to wear the proper clerical attire; and they are to shun completely everything that is unbecoming to their state.

These name only a few of the obligations that priests take upon themselves when they are ordained. But because they are ecclesial law, the bishop is within his authority to govern and regulate them in his diocese. The priest is subject to his bishop for living them properly within the letter of the law and the spirit of the law.

We see that the list of obligations covers a lot of areas. Take just one, for instance, a priest must watch who he hangs around. Now we do not want to take this too far, or else I could not minister to my people, they are a bunch of sinners, after all. But having the local five diamond call girl for a friend may not be the best idea, even if she is only just a friend and even if there are no special benefits. The bishop could indeed tell his priest to not be her friend.

I will tell a story on myself to better understand this. I was at a parish that had a school. Keep in mind that this was before the scandal of 2002. I had the practice of going over at lunch and talk with the children. As a way to make the encounter fun and as a way to give them something they will always remember, I would tug on the girls' ponytails, and the boys, I gave a light bump on the top of the head with my fist.

They laughed every time. The girls had fun feigning they did not like it and would hold their ponytail out for me and say, "Don't pull my ponytail." The boys would cover the top of their

head with their hands, but by the time I got to them, they moved them out of the way. I even remember one time, a girl came in with multiple ponytails, like 10 of them. I tugged on a few of them, but she made me chase her around the room first. She laughed the entire time as did the other children — good memories.

My bishop got word of this practice and told me to stop, that it could be construed as sexual — really! To this day, I do not know how it could be. It was in no way intended to be. To this day, even with all the scandal, I still believe he was wrong. What he asked was not immoral or contrary to my human dignity or to others, so I did as was commanded me. In obedience, I stopped. I still think the children are the ones who lost something that day, that special attention they got from the priest that made them feel special.

So we can see that with the obligations that a priest has, the bishop in turn has a lot of power over them. Can priests disobey? Yes, and a lot of priests do. What can the bishop do about it? Can he fire them? Certain offenses priests can make are canonically punishable by canon law. In these cases, they can be excommunicated, laicized, be removed from office (pastor or some other office at the chancery) and can have his faculties removed. Some of these the bishop can simply do on his own, and others require that the bishop take the priest before the tribunal (Church court).

Your less ethical bishops have other recourses as well. In particular, bad bishops like to send good priest out for psychotherapy at institutions that are in the bishop's back pocket. Their job is to destroy the priest psychologically. Many times, these priests simply leave the priesthood, which is just what the bishop wanted in the first place.

You might ask why the priest does not simply refuse. He can, and then the bishop will tell him that he has no faculties and no assignment so go find a job and a place to live. That is the best-case scenario. A worst case would be the priest actually having to

go into hiding because he fears for his life. Yes, technically the bishop does not have the power to treat priests this way. Remember I started out with "your less ethical bishops." If the bishop does such things, the priest has little recourse. Who can stop a bishop?

This was the example of the good priest with a bad bishop, now what of a bad priest with a bad bishop? They are probably in bed together (figuratively and literally). They simply work together as they are both disobedient to the Magisterium and to God. In other words, he gets away with bloody murder, sexual assaults, heresies, mistreatment of faithful Catholics and many other things.

And what of the last example of the bad priest with a good bishop? In the past, many of what we call the bad priests today would never have been made a priest in the first place. This would include those who do not adhere to the doctrines of the Faith, sodomites and even the effeminate would not have been allowed to be priests.

That would be a huge solution to much of our problems today if we returned to those practices. Assuming a good bishop inherited the bad priests, he still has authority over them. He can place conditions and restrictions on them and even terminate them. Why dose he not do so? Cowardice; he wants to be liked. He may even feign that there is nothing he can do. He is too weak. You know what I say: Don't take the job if you can't do it. The people deserve better.

We can see that this disobedience also translates into their spiritual life and so they are also disobedient to God. Now think of all those bad liturgies, heretical homilies and teachings, poor confessions, child and teen molestation, cover-ups, bribes, sodomy and so many other things being found among priests, bishops, cardinals and the Pope. If they were obedient, none of this would happen.

As long as our superiors are asking moral things from us that are within their authority to ask, then we are to practice obedience to them as if he were God. This is true even if their personal actions are immoral. So long as what they ask of us is not immoral, they are still the authority and we must obey. They will pay for their disobedience before God as we will if we disobey. On the other hand, the more prompt we are to obey, submit and be docile to our superiors, the more grace we merit.

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As I said, there are limits to following human authority. But here I remember the story of a saint (I do not remember which one) who was told by God to do one thing and was told by her superior to do another. This saint went to God to ask which she should do. God told her that she must be obedient to her superior.

Wow, this is the extent that God places power in the hands of man, that our command (so long as it is moral) should trump His. This shows the importance of obedience to those in authority over us. God gave us the Fourth Commandment as a training ground. If we can be obedient to one another, then we can be obedient to God.

All this in the idealistic sense becomes very difficult when the rubber meets the road, and the reality is that we have bishops who are modernist, sodomites, politicians and just down-right nasty characters. In this situation, there is little trust, and with little trust comes little respect, and with this comes selective obedience and even then only when commanded.

This is not the fault of the faithful, well-intentioned priest. It is the fault of the bishops who forget that you cannot simply demand respect, you have to earn it.

As a priest, the Church is my bride in a very special and intimate way. Just think, if you are a man who possesses blessed toxic masculinity and your beloved wife is being defiled, what would you do? Now think of the poor priest who has to watch his bishop, his superior, defile his bride. And now you want that priest to be obedient to him? And yet, this is precisely the burden good holy priests are asked to shoulder by God.

The solution is easy. The bishops have the authority and the power to right this ship. They just have to man up and be faithful and obedient to God and the Magisterium, tradition, doctrine and all that makes us the Catholic Church. Knowing how embedded the bishops are in modernism and the modern culture today, I would not hold my breath. I would continue to pray for them, though.

In conclusion, I write this with tears. If you know good priests, and I would hope that you number me among them, please pray for them and support them with loving and encouraging words.