

THE OBLIGATION OF THE FAITHFUL TO REMAIN
IN OBEDIENCE TO THE ROMAN PONTIFF AND THE BISHOPS
IN COMMUNION WITH HIM (CANN. 204 & 205). AN OUTLINE*

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Summary. The Author presents the third element of the full communion with the Church – ecclesiastical governance – namely the obligation of the faithful to remain in obedience to the Roman Pontiff and the bishops in communion with him. First, the definition of obedience, its theological and legal foundations and subject (recipient) of obedience were explained in the article. The Author, with regard to its subject, specified the following kinds of obedience: 1) all the faithful, 2) clerical persons, and 3) consecrated religious. With regard to the scope of obedience, it is required of: 1) absolute (that is bound with authentic and definitive teaching on faith and morality), 2) religious (that is bound with authentic but not definitive teaching), and 3) canonical (that is bound with maintaining ecclesiastical discipline).

Key words: Christian faithful, Church, full communion with the Church, clerical persons

In his general audience of 14 July 1965, Pope Paul VI declared: „Obedience, as a cordial and practical recognition of authority, is continually being questioned as contrary to the development of a person, unworthy of free beings, mature and adult, as methodically erroneous and producing weak and passive minds, as perpetuating old social relations in a modern era”¹. Fifty years on, the speech still seems to bear much relevance. The virtue of Christian obedience in today’s post-modern or post-contemporary world is hard to attain in everyday life, a fact which is eagerly emphasized by the mass media which are not necessarily interested in it being put in practice by the Church. The virtue is also difficult to analyze from a theoretical-legal point of view.

According to the legislator, „Those baptized are fully in the communion of the Catholic Church on this earth who are joined with Christ in its visible structure by the bonds of the profession of faith, the sacraments, and ecclesiastical

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¹ Paolo PP. VI, Udienza generale *L’autorità della Chiesa è pastorale*, 14 VII 1965, in: *Insegnamenti di Paolo VI* 3 (1965), p. 983–986.

governance” (can. 205)². My article focuses on the third element of the full communion with the Church, namely ecclesiastical governance (*regimen ecclesiae*), i.e. the obligation for all Christian faithful to remain in obedience to the Roman Pontiff and the bishops in communion with him (cann. 204 & 205).

Such a formulation of the subject matter calls for several questions. What are the theological and legal foundations of obedience? Why is a contemporary and reasonable human being to be obedient to another person who has equal dignity of a child of God? What is the scope of this obedience? How different is Christian obedience to obedience under secular law? What is its essence and goal? Does obedience limit personal freedom? Why is the virtue of obedience in the Church so important that it has become a central duty for the clergy and lay faithful? Why has obedience always posed difficulty for humans?

Therefore, before the above questions are answered, the notion of obedience will have to be defined.

1. DEFINITION OF OBEDIENCE

Obedience (Lat. *oboedientia*) is an attitude of submission to God’s will and lawful decisions made by superiors and subjection of one’s conduct within lawful means on account of one’s faith or a desire to respect law³. „Above all, obedience is a filial attitude, [...] a way of growth, thus a way of personal freedom since it makes it possible to adopt a plan or will that is different to one’s own will, an attitude which on one hand does not humiliate or reduce the dignity of a human being but on the other builds it up”⁴.

The legislator interprets obedience as an evangelical counsel undertaken in the spirit of faith and love in the following of Christ who is obedient until death, requiring a meaningful submission of the will to legitimate superiors, who stand in the place of God, when they command according to their proper constitutions (see can. 601)⁵.

2. THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION

Obedience to God, who is the supreme and absolute authority, demonstrates the whole history of salvation. The theological foundation can be found in Genesis. While creating mankind in his own image, God gave man a task that

² *Codex Iuris Canonici auctoritate Ioannis Pauli PP. II promulgatus*, 25 I 1983, AAS 75 (1983), pars II, pp. 1–317.

³ A. Derdziuk, *Posłuszeństwo*, in: *Encyklopedia katolicka*, vol. XVI, col. 52.

⁴ Congregazione per gli Istituti di Vita Consacrata e le Società di Vita Apostolica, *Istruzione II servizio dell’autorità e l’obbedienza*, 11 V 2008, Libreria Editrice Vaticana 2008.

⁵ Cf. M. Sitarz, *Posłuszeństwo*, in: *Słownik prawa kanonicznego*, Warszawa 2004, col. 132.

is summed up by the divinely inspired author in the words: „Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it [Gen 1:28].” Through these words mankind became part of the divine act of creation, but he was thus obliged to manifest and fulfil the will of the Triune God on earth. Man, a reasonable and free-willed creature, surrendered to Satan. Satan is a fallen angel who was first to refuse to obey God by saying *non serviam*, i.e. „I shall not serve you” or „I will not carry your orders” and set himself a goal of fighting for man against God. The Serpent (Tempter) told the first man that he would become equal to God: „When you gain freedom by rejecting God, you shall be like Him. You will decide what is good and what is evil; you will not need to obey His commandments; you will be supreme law to yourself. Adam, the first man, craved God’s help and fell due to his disobedience, and we all have been hurt through this sin”⁶. It must be noted, though, that not everything should be blamed on the weakness and lack of strong will in people. The conflict of submission has been present since the dawn of history. *Non serviam* keeps reoccurring; it is the cause of the fall of man, first disobedience, and constant disloyalty even of the Chosen People⁷. The Bible puts genuine faith on a par with obedience to God. The totality of religious, ethical, and political life was associated with obedience and loyalty to the covenant formed with God. The Old Testament regards obedience as listening intently to God’s voice, answering to His calling, and faithful fulfilment of His orders. Obedience is one of the essential elements of the covenant made between God and Abraham [Gen 17:1] and the one made with the Chosen People [Ex 19:5–8]. It has an individual and communal dimension. God proposes a covenant, while people express their approval and readiness to accept and dutifully fulfil God’s law. A fulfilment of a covenant demonstrates that the Chosen People obey the commandments of God. In the Old Testament, Abraham serves as an example of faith and obedience.

In the New Testament, an act of faith is regarded as an expression of people’s submission to Jesus Christ and His Gospel. Christ, a role model of utmost obedience and faith, associates listening and accepting His words with its obedient fulfilment [Mt 7:21; 26:39; Lk 6:47]. Mary, who fulfils the will of God, shows exemplary obedience by accompanying Christ in every moment of His life, until his death on the cross, thus becoming the most perfect realisation of obedience to God (CCC 144)⁸. The acceptance of the Divine Word entails one’s readiness to reconcile their life with God and becoming like Him with respect to obedience⁹. The new chosen people – the Church – imitates Christ who was ready to fulfil the will of His Father in His obedience, even until death [Ph 2:8;

⁶ L.M. Örsy, *Otwarcie się na Ducha. Życie zakonne po Vaticanum*, Warszawa 1976, pp. 93–94.

⁷ M. Żurowski, *Normy ogólne prawa osobowego. O duchowieństwie w ogólności*, Warszawa 1968, p. 153.

⁸ *Catechismus Catholicae Ecclesiae*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana 1997.

⁹ J. Mastej, *Postuszeństwo wiary*, in: *Encyklopedia katolicka*, vol. XVI, col. 57.

Heb 5:8]. The other Adam, Jesus Christ, taking the form of a slave, „did not wish to be equal to God, and we were all healed through his obedience”¹⁰. This plan was the will of God who „liked not the death but the will of He who died voluntarily”¹¹.

The belief in Jesus Christ also implies obedience to the Church, including profession of the same faith and maintenance of ecclesiastical discipline. Obedience to the Church is obedience to Christ Himself, who said to His disciples and followers: „Whoever listens to you listens to me” [Lk 10:16]¹². The obligation of obedience for the Christian faithful follows from the hierarchical structure of the Church and is manifested by a recognition of the ecclesiastical authority who represents Jesus Christ on earth, according to His will and precepts of law.

3. LEGAL FOUNDATIONS

The legislator in CIC/83 uses three various terms to denote obedience: 1) the noun *oboedientia*, *-ae*¹³, used in ten canons (cann. 199, 7^o; 212, §1; 273; 573, §2; 590, §2; 598, §1; 601; 618; 705; 1470, §2), and the adjective *oboediens*, *-ntis*¹⁴, used in one canon (can. 601); 2) the verb *obsequio*, *-are*¹⁵ or the noun *obsequium*, *-ii*¹⁶, featuring in five canons (cann. 218; 678, §1; 752; 753; 1749), and 3) the verb *obtempero*, *-are*¹⁷, used in one canon (can. 260). In the Catechism of the Catholic Church, the word „obedience” is used forty-seven times¹⁸.

¹⁰ Örsy, *Otwarcie na Ducha*, p. 94.

¹¹ S. Bernardus Claraevallensis, *Epistola CXC seu Tractatus de erroribus Abelardi*, cap. VIII, 21, PL 182, 1070b; *Faciem tuam*, no. 5.

¹² J. Mastej, *Elementy teologii wiary w świetle listu apostołskiego „motu proprio” Porta fidei Benedykta XVI*, in: *Rok wiary – rok odnowy*, ed. K. Kaucha, A. Pietrzak, W. Rebeta, Lublin 2013, p. 49.

¹³ *Oboedientia*, *-ae* stands for: 1) obedience, submission (*iungere pedem oboedientiae* – to conform, *oboedientia canonica* – canonical obedience due to an ecclesiastical superior, *littera oboedientiae* – a letter that demands obedience, *dare oboedientiam* – to declare obedience, *sub virtute sanctae oboedientiae* – by virtue of obedience); 2) mediævally, dues payable to a feudal lord; 3) subjection of peasants to their landlord; 4) mediævally, land owned by virtue of fief; 5) a pledge of allegiance made to a pope.

¹⁴ *Oboediens*, *-ntis* – obedient, submissive, eager, tractable, *oboediens iuri* – obedient to law.

¹⁵ *Obsequio*, *-are* – to obey someone.

¹⁶ *Obsequium*, *-ii* – 1) submission, obedience (*in obsequi esse* – be obedient, *colere obsequium* – display obedience); 2) obedience to parents and patrons; 3) service (*obsequio suspicere* – employ as a servant, *in alicuius obsequio esse* – be in someone’s service, *o. servitutis s.o. servile* – service of slaves); 4) ministry; 5) favour; 6) office; 7) devotion; 8) a sign of reverence.

¹⁷ *Obtempero*, *-are* – 1) be obedient, yield, listen; 2) have regard for something; 3) *obtemperando alicui rei* – unwilling to allow something; 4) *obtemperare insultibus* – surrender, yield; 5) perform the will of a testator.

¹⁸ CCC: 143; 144; 145; 148; 156; 475; 494 (x2); 511 (x2); 532 (x2); 539; 576; 615 (x2); 623; 852; 891; 908; 915; 944; 1009; 1011; 1125; 1204; 1567 (x2); 1831; 1850; 1871; 1897; 1900; 1930; 1991; 2087; 2098; 2135; 2216; 2217; 2242; 2251; 2313; 2340; 2606; 2716; 2825.

The obligation of obedience with regard to all Christian faithful is spelled out in can. 212, §1: „Conscious of their own responsibility, the Christian faithful are bound to follow with Christian obedience those things which the sacred pastors, inasmuch as they represent Christ, declare as teachers of the faith or establish as rulers of the Church”. Additionally: „§2. The Christian faithful are free to make known to the pastors of the Church their needs, especially spiritual ones, and their desires. §3. According to the knowledge, competence, and prestige which they possess, they have the right and even at times the duty to manifest to the sacred pastors their opinion on matters which pertain to the good of the Church and to make their opinion known to the rest of the Christian faithful, without prejudice to the integrity of faith and morals, with reverence toward their pastors, and attentive to common advantage and the dignity of persons”.

There are many legal grounds supporting the obligation of obedience regarding clerics¹⁹. The Second Vatican Council teaches that the spirit of cooperation underlies priestly obedience, and that is based on the participation in episcopal ministry; it springs from holy orders and canonical mission²⁰. Clerics are to show obedience by virtue of their orders of diaconate and presbyterate during the reception of which, kneeling, they place their folded hands between the hands of the bishop and reply „I promise” (*promitto*) to the bishop's question: „Do you promise me and my successors reverence and obedience?”²¹. The obligation of obedience regarding clerics also stems from their incardination, that is an obligatory association of a cleric²² with a particular Church or personal prelature (can. 265). With regard to the obedience of those ordained, CIC/83 provides the following: „Clerics are bound by a special obligation to show reverence and obedience to the Supreme Pontiff and their own ordinary” (can. 273), which implies not only a diocesan bishop but also vicar general and episcopal vicar as well as all those mentioned in can. 134²³.

¹⁹ H. Stawniak, *Inkardynacja w misji Kościoła w porządku prawnym Kościoła łacińskiego*, Warszawa 2013, p. 289.

²⁰ Sacrosanctum Concilium Oecumenicum Vaticanum II, *Decretum de presbyterorum ministerio et vita Presbyterorum ordinis*, 7 XII 1965, AAS 58 (1966), pp. 991–1024.

²¹ This is a question addressed to ordinands by their ordinary. If the bishop is not an ordinand's ordinary, he will ask him: „Do you promise reverence and obedience to the bishop who is your ordinary for the time being?” If a candidate is a member of a religious order, he is asked: „Do you promise reverence and obedience to your bishop and your competent superior?”. See: Pontificale Romanum ex decreto Sacrosancti Concilii Vaticani II renovatum auctoritate Pauli PP. VI editum Ioannis Pauli PP. II cura recognitum *De Ordinatione episcopi, presbyterorum et diaconorum*, edition typical altera, Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis 1990.

²² B. Zubert, *Inkardynacja – ekskardynacja*, in: *Encyklopedia katolicka*, vol. VII, col. 224.

²³ „§1. In addition to the Roman Pontiff, by the title of *ordinary* are understood in the law diocesan bishops and others who, even if only temporarily, are placed over some particular church or a community equivalent to it according to the norm of can. 368 as well as those who possess general ordinary executive power in them, namely, vicars general and episcopal vicars; likewise, for their own members, major superiors of clerical religious institutes of pontifical right and of clerical societies of apostolic life of pontifical right who at least possess ordinary executive power. §2. By

4. THE SUBJECT (RECIPIENT) OF OBEDIENCE

According to the legislator, obedience in the Catholic Church, which is constituted and ordered as a community in this world must be shown to the Bishop of Rome and bishops in communion with him. The Roman Pontiff commands reverent obedience, resulting from his primacy in the universal Church. A successor of Saint Peter, he holds supreme, full and immediate power. This authority extends over all Churches entrusted to the care of bishops, and he can exercise this power freely (see cann. 331–335). The episcopate, one and undivided, appears as united in fraternity around Peter, in order to fulfil its mission to proclaim the Gospel and to shepherd the Church so that it grows throughout the world, always remaining an apostolic community amid the rich diversity of times and places²⁴. The image of Jesus Christ, who was „obedient even until death – death on a cross” [Ph 2:8], whose food was to do the will of the Father [cf. Jn 4:34], appears before every bishop as a supreme example of obedience that became the reason for our salvation [cf. Rm 5:19]. Therefore, „conforming himself to Christ, the bishop offers an outstanding service to unity and to ecclesial communion: his conduct demonstrates that no one in the Church may legitimately command others if he does not first offer himself as an example of obedience to the Word of God and to the authority of the Church”²⁵.

The obligation of Catholics to show respect and obedience to their bishop has sacramental and ecclesial foundation. Also, through ordination and canonical mission received from a bishop, clerics participate in the episcopal ministry of the People of God. Vices and the bad example of shepherds should not diminish our respect for them for no vice diminishes the power of their priesthood²⁶. The bond between a bishop and his presbyterium is strengthened by the incardination of a cleric in a given particular Church. The relation of obedience to one’s own bishop, codified by can. 212, §1 and can. 273, also pertains to those made equivalent by law to a diocesan bishop (can. 381, §2).

In a homily delivered at the outset of his pontificate, Pope Benedict XVI stated: „My real programme of governance is not to do my own will, not to pursue my own ideas, but to listen, together with the whole Church, to the word and the will of the Lord, to be guided by Him, so that He himself will lead the

the title of *local ordinary* are understood all those mentioned in §1 except the superiors of religious institutes and of societies of apostolic life”.

²⁴ Congregazione per i Vescovi, *Direttorio per il ministero pastorale dei vescovi Apostolorum successores*, 22 II 2004, Libreria Editrice Vaticana 2004, no. 11.

²⁵ Sacrosanctum Concilium Oecumenicum Vaticanum II, *Constitutio dogmatica de Divina revelatione Dei Verbum*, 18 XI 1965, AAS 58 (1966), pp. 821–836; Ioannes Paulus PP. II, *Adhortatio apostolica post-synodalis de episcopo ministro Evangelii Iesu Christi pro mundi spe Pastores gregis*, 16 X 2003, AAS 96 (2004), pp. 826–924; AS 43.

²⁶ Św. Katarzyna ze Sieny, *Miasto duszy. Listy o Bogu i polityce*, transl. L. Grygiel, Poznań 2001, p. 90.

Church at this hour of our history”²⁷. Saint Augustine reminds us that he who yields obedience always does the will of God, not because the order of an authority unconditionally conforms with God’s will but because God wills that we give obedience to the one who heads a community²⁸. Yet, authority should seek – through prayer, reflection and taking advice of others – what God really wants. Otherwise, instead of representing God, a superior will put himself in His place. Authority and obedience are not distinct or interchangeable realities but two dimensions of the same evangelical reality, or the same Christian mystery – two complementary ways of participating in the same sacrifice of Christ. Authority and obedience are embodied by Jesus. They are to be regarded in direct association with Him and in a real relation to Him²⁹.

5. KINDS OF OBEDIENCE

With regard to its subject, obedience is required of: 1) all the faithful, 2) clerical persons, and 3) consecrated religious.

5.1 Obedience of the faithful

The obedience of all the faithful determines their relationship to their Sacred Pastors, that is the Bishop of Rome (as the administrator of the universal Church), and heads of particular Churches. The faithful are bound by obedience in matters regarding faith and church discipline. This duty rests on a mandate given by Christ to the Apostles and their successors³⁰. Obedience, springing from the sacrament of Baptism, is called „Christian obedience”. It is inspired by the need to follow Jesus Christ in His dedication to truth. The ultimate relation created by this obedience is truth, not the authority of the person who proclaims this truth, and God Himself is the ultimate and supreme subject of obedience. „We are children of God and this is why we are not subject to any man or other creature. Children of God can only come under His authority”³¹. However, if He – as God – surrenders some of His authority to a human being, then – according to His will – we must be yield obedience to God being obedient to another human being. All Christian faithful are bound by Christian obedience. For this reason, as Vatican II resolved, they are to willingly comply with the decisions of

²⁷ Benedictus PP. XVI, *Homilia in celebratione Initii Ministerii Petri*, 24 IV 2005, AAS 97 (2005), p. 709.

²⁸ S. Aurelius Augustinus, *Enarratio in Psalmum LXX. Sermo I. De prima parte Psalmi*, 2, PL 36, p. 875.

²⁹ *Faciem tuam*, nr 12. See also: Örsy, *Otwarcie się na Ducha*, p. 115.

³⁰ J. Krukowski, *Obowiązki i uprawnienia wszystkich wiernych chrześcijan*, in: *Komentarz do Kodeksu Prawa Kanonicznego. Księga II. Lud Boży. Część I. Wierni chrześcijanie. Część II. Ustrój hierarchiczny Kościoła*, ed. J. Krukowski, vol. II/1, Poznań 2005, p. 28.

³¹ Örsy, *Otwarcie się na Ducha*, p. 95.

ordained shepherds acting as representatives of Christ, teachers and administrators in the Church³². Christian life demands of man a greater spirit. According to the teaching of Pope Paul VI, life „will require a prompt obedience, no less necessary and difficult now than formerly, but it will be all the more meritorious in that it is inspired more by supernatural motives than by natural ones”. He added: „Conformity to the spirit of the world, the rejection of the rules of Christian asceticism, indifference in the face of the laxity of contemporary morals, emancipation from the authority of wise and lawful superiors, apathy concerning the contradictory forms of modern thought-these are not the things that can give vigour to the Church and fit it to receive the power and strength of the Holy Spirit’s gifts. [...] The only things which can bring these blessings on the Church are the following: the determination to live in accordance with divine grace, faithfulness to the Gospel of Christ, unity in the ranks of the sacred hierarchy and among Christian communities”³³.

5.2 Obedience of clerical persons

According to the Directory for the Life and Ministry of Priests, drawn by the Congregation for the Clergy in 1994, obedience is a priestly value of utmost importance³⁴. The Congregation for Bishops, in their Directory on the Pastoral Ministry of Bishops of 2004, provided more on this: „The practice of obedience is strengthened rather than weakened if the bishop, as far as possible and without prejudice to justice and charity, explains to the interested parties the reasons for his decisions. He should show equal care and attention to every priest, because all of them, while their gifts will be many and varied, are engaged in the service of the Lord as members of a single presbyterium. The Bishop should encourage a spirit of initiative among his priests, avoiding anything that might lead them to understand obedience in a passive and irresponsible manner. He should ensure that each gives his best and does so generously, placing his own capacities in the service of God and of the Church, with the mature freedom of the sons of God” (AS 76).

5.3 Obedience of consecrated religious

By divine institution, in the Church there are sacred ministers, i.e. clerics, and the lay faithful (see can. 207, §1). There are members of the Christian faithful from both these groups who, through the profession of the evangelical counsels by means of vows or other sacred bonds recognized and sanctioned by the

³² Sacrosanctum Concilium Oecumenicum Vaticanum II, Constitutio dogmatica de Ecclesia *Lumen Gentium*, 21 XI 1964, AAS 57 (1965), pp. 5–67.

³³ Paulus PP. VI, Litterae encyclicae quibus viis Catholicam Ecclesiam in praesenti munus suum exsequi oporteat *Ecclesiam suam*, 6 VIII 1964, AAS 56 (1964), pp. 609–659, no. 51.

³⁴ Congregazione per il Clero, Directorio per il Minister e la vita dei Presbiteri *Tota Ecclesia*, 31 I 1994, Libreria Editrice Vaticana 1994.

Church, are consecrated to God in their own special way (can. 207, §2). It is a state of consecrated life, which does not belong to the hierarchical structure of the Church, but results from the acceptance of a spiritual gift from the Holy Spirit and belongs to the life and sanctity of the Church (LG 43; can. 207, §2)³⁵.

Obedience of consecrated religious persons was subject to theological and canonical scrutiny during a Warsaw scientific conference entitled *The Evangelical Counsel of Obedience in Consecrated Religious Life vs. Personal Freedom*, held in 2009³⁶. Also considered were the recent regulations of the Apostolic See on this matter, i.e. the instruction of The Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life entitled *The Ministry of Authority and Obedience* of 5 May 2008. Hence I will not focus on the obedience of religious in the presented paper; nevertheless it should be pointed out that with relation to consecrated religious persons this obligation appears either in a strict or broad form: by virtue of obedience vows (can. 601) and on account of the virtue of obedience³⁷. In the strict sense, obedience binds all consecrated religious with relation to the Roman Pontiff as their supreme superior for all (can. 590)³⁸, and towards religious superiors, in accordance with the proper law of particular institutes. Obedience in the broad sense, on the other hand, binds them with relation to the highest ecclesiastical authority as well as bishops (can. 678, §1)³⁹ within their competence⁴⁰.

6. THE SCOPE OF OBEDIENCE

According to Thomas Aquinas „[...] the proper object of obedience is a precept, and this proceeds from another's will”, but he goes on to say that „man is subject to God simply as regards all things, both internal and external,

³⁵ J. Krukowski, *Wierni chrześcijanie*, in: *Komentarz do Kodeksu Prawa Kanonicznego*, vol. II/1, pp. 21–22. Pope John Paul II, however, stressed that „the idea of a Church made up only of sacred ministers and lay people does not therefore conform to the intentions of her divine Founder, as revealed to us by the Gospels and the other writings of the New Testament”. See: Ioannes Paulus PP. II, *Adhortatio apostolica post-synodalis de vita consecrata eiusque missione in Ecclesia ac mundo Vita consecrata*, 25 III 1996, AAS 88 (1996), pp. 377–486, no. 29.

³⁶ See: *Ewangeliczna rada posłuszeństwa w życiu konsekrowanym zakonnym a wolność osoby. Materiały z Ogólnopolskiej Konferencji Naukowej. UKSW Warszawa 21 października 2009*, ed. W. Kiwior, J. Krajczyński, H. Stawniak, Warszawa 2010, p. 126 + 5 unnumbered pages.

³⁷ E. Gambari, *Życie zakonne po Soborze Watykańskim II*, Kraków 1998, pp. 388–389.

³⁸ „§1. Inasmuch as institutes of consecrated life are dedicated in a special way to the service of God and of the whole Church, they are subject to the supreme authority of the Church in a special way.”

³⁹ „Religious are subject to the power of bishops whom they are bound to follow with devoted submission and reverence in those matters which regard the care of souls, the public exercise of divine worship, and other works of the apostolate.”

⁴⁰ Gambari, *Życie zakonne*, p. 389. See also: W. Kiwior, *Posłuszeństwo zakonne papieżowi i biskupowi diecezjalnemu*, in: *Ewangeliczna rada posłuszeństwa w życiu konsekrowanym...*, pp. 45–46.

wherefore he is bound to obey Him in all things. On the other hand, inferiors are not subject to their superiors in all things, but only in certain things and in a particular way, in respect of which the superior stands between God and his subjects, whereas in respect of other matters the subject is immediately under God, by Whom he is taught either by the natural or by the written law⁴¹. An obedient person knows that grace that calls for obedience does not destroy nature but builds upon it. Therefore, well-conceived obedience can oppose neither individual growth nor development of a mature personality. Obedience is imperfect if an order is fulfilled merely according to its wording. Obedience is full if it has been fulfilled according to the intention of the party who issues an order. We obey a superior not as a human being, as this would not amount to much, but we obey a person for God on whose behalf this authority acts⁴².

The scope of obedience is fully explained by the Second Vatican Council which teaches the faithful on the obligation to comply with bishops in matters regarding faith and morality. „This religious submission of mind and will must be shown in a special way to the authentic magisterium of the Roman Pontiff, even when he is not speaking *ex cathedra*; that is, it must be shown in such a way that his supreme magisterium is acknowledged with reverence, the judgments made by him are sincerely adhered to, according to his manifest mind and will. His mind and will in the matter may be known either from the character of the documents, from his frequent repetition of the same doctrine, or from his manner of speaking. Although the individual bishops do not enjoy the prerogative of infallibility, they nevertheless proclaim Christ's doctrine infallibly whenever, even though dispersed through the world, but still maintaining the bond of communion among themselves and with the successor of Peter, and authentically teaching matters of faith and morals, they are in agreement on one position as definitively to be held. This is even more clearly verified when, gathered together in an ecumenical council, they are teachers and judges of faith and morals for the universal Church, whose definitions must be adhered to with the submission of faith” (LG 25).

The fragments of the conciliar dogmatic constitution on the Church that were included in CIC/83 lead us to believe that the obligation of obedience concerns the reception of the truths of faith and moral principles proclaimed by bishops as mandataries of the Magisterium. Therefore obedience may also be absolute when it is bound with authentic and definitive teaching on faith and morality (cann. 749–750; it can also be religious, that is bound with authentic but not definitive teaching (cann. 752–753). The obligation of obedience also

⁴¹ *Summae Theologiae* II–II^{ae}, q. 104, a. 2 & a. 5.

⁴² Paulus PP. VI, *Allocutio ad E. mos Patres Cardinales et ad Consultores Pontificii Consilii Codici Iuris Canonici recognoscendo*, 20 XI 1965, AAS 57 (1965), pp. 985–989.

encompasses obedience in maintaining ecclesiastical discipline⁴³. It is also called canonical obedience, i.e. one that is restricted to matters that are regulated by the precepts of universal and particular law (can. 754), hence the object of this obedience does not encompass the personal life of the faithful, respecting their right to privacy (can. 220) – autonomy that belongs to every person; nor does it encompass obligations due to state authorities, unless these are regulated by canon law⁴⁴. The Pontifical Council for Legislative Texts added that the submission of the clergy to a bishop must not be restricted to subordination like that of citizens or an employer-employee relationship⁴⁵.

CONCLUSIONS

Canon 212 is fundamental since it imposes on all the faithful an obligation to acknowledge ecclesiastical authority which implies Christian obedience recognizing supernatural values. Simultaneously, the legislator stresses human freedom and people's right to file a petition, to communicate their needs to their sacred pastors – not only spiritual ones but also desires (can. 212, §2). Authentic obedience to God, the Pope, and bishops, who are all in communion together, should not promote passivity or relieve of reasoning or responsibility, but promote initiative in public life at the church, state, and self-government levels. Every person, as a reasonable and free creature, is obliged to seek truth about God and His Church. Once the truth is discovered, a person has a duty and right to accept and observe it in agreement with their conscience (see can. 748). In public, one has a duty and right to work so that the Gospel reaches „all people in every age and in every land” (can. 211). Also, according to their knowledge, competence, and skills, they have duty and the right to manifest to the sacred pastors their opinion on matters pertaining to the good of the Church and to make their opinion known to the rest of the Christian faithful, maintaining the integrity of faith and morals, respect for their pastors, and attention to common good and the dignity of a human being (see can 213, §3).

When fulfilling God's will, every faithful person should be brave and humble, and serve truth and justice (see Josh 1:9). Bravery rules out slavish fear of losing authority or machinations of evil people. Truth rids people of their

⁴³ P. Skonieczny, *Postulowanie. III. W Prawie kanonicznym*, in: *Encyklopedia katolicka*, vol. XVI, coll. 55–56.

⁴⁴ J. Krukowski, *Obowiązki i uprawnienia duchownych*, w: *Komentarz do Kodeksu Prawa Kanonicznego*, vol. II/1, p. 94. For more, see: W. Kacprzyk, *Prawo do prywatności w prawie kanonicznym i w prawie polskim*, Lublin 2008.

⁴⁵ Pontificio Consilio per i Testi Legislativi, *Nota explicativa Elementi per configurare l'ambito di responsabilità canonica del Vescovo diocesano nei riguardi dei presbiteri incardinati nelle propria diocesi e che esercitano nella medesima il loro ministero*, 12 II 2004, „Communications” 36 (2004), no. 1, p. 33, I.

political entanglements, false sycophants and fierce opponents. Justice, married with charity, makes it possible to make peace and moral order with a guarantee that they will persist regardless of political circumstances. It allows people to grow in the fullness of humanity, which is holiness, because holiness bears fruit in all spheres of life. The holiness of one person spreads and transforms the whole Church, and improves the life of social and political communities. A holy person who loves God and their fellow human beings feels obliged and even has a right to judge political events and decisions of state and Church authorities. Such a person is absolutely free and responsible in doing so, empowered and enlightened by intense contact with God. If engaged in politics, he or she proclaims the Truth in all kinds of situations and bravely defends the evangelical values to the point of being „politically incorrect.” This kind of person judges every historical event in the light of the laws ruling the story of salvation. The world of today, defined by market rules and dominated by secular mentality, is in urgent need of spirituality and the Christian vision of the world and human beings⁴⁶, and above all a Christian vision of obedience.

Translated by Agnieszka Romanko

O BOWIĄZEK WIERNYCH DO ZACHOWANIA POSŁUSZEŃSTWA
BISKUPOWI RZYMU I BISKUPOM, BĘDĄCYM W ŁĄCZNOŚCI Z NIM
(KAN. 204; 205). ZARYS PROBLEMATYKI

Streszczenie. Autor przedstawia trzeci element pełnej przynależności do Kościoła – zwierchnictwo kościelne – czyli obowiązek wiernych do zachowania posłuszeństwa Biskupowi Rzymu i biskupom będącym w łączności z nim. W artykule została wyjaśniona definicja posłuszeństwa, podstawy teologiczne i prawne, a także podmiot (adresat) posłuszeństwa. Autor, ze względu na zakres podmiotowy, wyróżnił następujące rodzaje posłuszeństwa: 1) wszystkich wiernych, 2) osób duchownych oraz 3) osób konsekrowanych zakonnych. Ze względu na zakres posłuszeństwa zostało wyszczególnione posłuszeństwo: 1) absolutne (odnoszące się do autentycznego i definitywnego nauczania w zakresie wiary i moralności), 2) religijne (odnoszące się do nauczania autentycznego, ale nie definitywnego) oraz 3) kanoniczne (odnoszące się do zachowywaniu dyscypliny kościelnej).

Słowa kluczowe: pełna przynależność do Kościoła, wierni chrześcijanie, Kościół, osoby duchowne

⁴⁶ Św. Katarzyna ze Sieny, *Miasto duszy. Listy o Bogu i polityce*, pp. 16–19.