



In his fourth Lenten meditation on Friday, Fr. Cantalmessa focuses on the place of obedience in the Christian life.

Fr Raniero Cantalamessa focuses our attention on the theme of obedience as presented by Paul in the Letter to the Romans: reflecting on themes from St Paul's Letter to the Romans: "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities."

Obedience to the Gospel

St Paul and the other disciples of Jesus were taking their first steps in society with an understanding that were following someone whose "kingdom was not of this world." They began to understand that "obedience to the state is a result and an aspect of a much more important and comprehensive obedience that the apostle calls 'obedience to the gospel,'" says Fr Cantalamessa. Every type of Christian obedience must be rooted not in obedience to human beings, but to God.

Fr Cantalamessa uses the image of the main thread of a spider's web. The spider used this main thread to construct its web and once done, "the center thread is what holds together all of the spider's weaving; without it everything collapses." If any other thread breaks, the spider can repair the web. But if the central thread breaks the spider abandons the web and begins work on another. Such is obedience in any human organism, including the Church.

The obedience of Christ

Fr Cantalamessa then turns our attention to Jesus who is defined in Scripture as "the Obedient one." It is his obedience that St Paul says makes us righteous. Jesus "becomes obedient unto death" (cf Phil 2:8), and "learned obedience through what he suffered" (Heb 5:8). We too must understand the "nature of this act of obedience", says Father Cantalamessa. It is the "exact antithesis of Adam's disobedience.... At the origin of all disobedience is disobedience to God, and at the origin of all obedience is obedience to God."

Christ, the “Obedient One” is the head of those who choose to be “obedient in opposition to Adam who was the head of the disobedient,” Father Cantalamessa continues. As Christians, Paul tells us that Christians have freely submitted ourselves to Christ on the day of baptism. Therefore, “with baptism there came a change of masters, a shift of kingdoms: from sin to righteousness, from disobedience to obedience, from Adam to Christ.”

Obedience in daily life

Obedience is an essential component in the Christian life. Concretely, we can approach each day as Psalm 40 indicates to us. The author of the Letter to the Hebrews puts this Psalm on the lips of Jesus: “As is written of me in the scroll, behold, I come to do your will, O God” (Heb 10:7). “Now it’s our turn,” concludes Fr Cantalamessa. “All of life can be lived day by day under the banner of these words, ‘Behold, I come to do your will, O God!’ In the morning, at the beginning of the new day, then going to an appointment or a meeting, at beginning of a new task, we can say, ‘Behold, I come to do your will, O God!’”