

- Both our first reading and our Gospel today touch on obedience—to God, and, by Jesus’ words to Peter, to the Church.
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- Obedience. To our modern ear, the word seems so autocratic and oppressive...so limiting of our freedom...
- ...and yet...must not the instruction of an all-good God—a Father who loves us so desperately that He sent His Son to die for our salvation—redound only to our own good and benefit?
- ...for scripture is given to us only for our good. There is no other purpose for it.
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- So...when applied to our observance to the Word of God, obedience redounds—and can ONLY redound—to our good...
- ...for God’s Word IS Goodness itself, because God’s Word is Jesus Christ...as we hear in the Gospel of John: *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...In him was life, and the life was the light of men...to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God...”* (John 1:1-14)
- *“...children of God”*—an unmatched, totally undeserved privilege held out to us on a silver platter. This is God’s only wish for us. This is the only purpose for His guidance in the scriptures.
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- You parents: do you not give instruction to your children—not for sadistic joy of exerting power, but only for their good?
- Then how do we not understand that the guidance of the Heavenly Father is only for that very same purpose...and thus obstinacy and rebellion against God can only result in our (and others’) harm.

- Certainly we have to resist the immediacy of inordinate and, at times, even disordered, passions which lead us away from God... but we are given our reason for that very purpose: to see the good, and to understand that it is God's way that leads us to it.
- This is why Peter and the apostles proclaimed in the first reading: *"We must obey God rather than men."*
- ...as we hear in 1 Samuel: *"Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."* (1Sa 15:22 RSV)...and St. Paul says of himself and the apostles: *"...we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith..."* (Rom 1:5 RSV)

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- Jesus certainly emphasizes the need for obedience to God.
 - He tells a young man in the Gospels—and us as well: *"If you would enter life, keep the commandments."* (Matt 19:17 RSV)
 - And in a Gospel reading we had last Thursday, He says: *"Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever disobeys the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God remains upon him."* Certainly an ominous, and yet definitive, statement.
 - ...because to obey Christ is to choose the Good—not only for ourselves, but for all those around us.

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- Now St. Thomas Aquinas reminds us that God is not wrathful, nor does He hate, as we think of it...and that words for violent emotions such "wrath" and "hate" used for God in scripture are used due to the similarity of effects of disobedience.
 - God is our shield...and when we disobey Him, we are like a soldier who abandons the safety of the ramparts for the open

ground, and thus leaves himself vulnerable to the volleys of the enemy.

- And sometimes God—like any parent—chastises in order to guide a child, not out of hatred.
- And so...are we not foolish to leave God for earthly things...when those things are so temporary? *“For what will it profit a man, if he gains the whole world and forfeits his life?”* (Mat 16:26 RSV)
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- Obedience to God’s Word is our path to spiritual freedom.
- Only in Christ are we set free from destructive slaveries. Jesus assures us: *“Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin...So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.”* (John 8:34-36)
- Do we not see this in addictions to sin—sexual excess, excessive gambling and drinking, drugs, etc.
- And it is through God’s Truth—through Christ—that we obtain freedom: *“If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.”* (John 8:31-32)

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- And finally...our Gospel re-emphasizes the authority of the Church through Peter and the apostles...and thus through the popes and bishops who are their successors...whom Jesus assured would have the guidance of the Holy Spirit. It is given to them to feed God’s flock.
 - For, as you know, in another place Jesus tells Peter: *“...you are Peter [rock], and on this rock I will build my church...I will give you [Peter] the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”* (Matthew 16:16-19)

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- Very plain, really—Christ gives His authority to the Church... though many go into contortions trying to explain away this authority.
- But in the end, God is the absolute authority, for He not only created all things, but keeps all things in existence.
- And yet...because He is all-good and all-loving, all that He ordains is for Good...though we may not understand how or why in our limitations of vision.

- So let us follow the Church...not haltingly or with complaint... because to follow the Church is to follow Christ its head...for He tells the apostles: “*He who hears you hears me, and he who rejects you rejects me...*” (Luke 10:16)
- God is in charge...and He promises to guide the Church into all truth...
- ...and Jesus assures us: “*I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.*” (John 8:12)

Reading 1

[Acts 5:27-32, 40b-41](#)

When the captain and the court officers had brought the apostles in and made them stand before the Sanhedrin, the high priest questioned them, “We gave you strict orders, did we not, to stop teaching in that name? Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and want to bring this man’s blood upon us.” But Peter and the apostles said in reply, “We must obey God rather than men. The God of our ancestors raised Jesus, though you had him killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him at his right hand as leader and savior to grant Israel repentance and forgiveness of sins. We are witnesses of these things, as is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him.” The Sanhedrin ordered the apostles to stop speaking in the name of Jesus, and dismissed them. So they left the presence of the Sanhedrin, rejoicing that they had been found worthy to suffer dishonor for the sake of the name.

[Ps 30:2, 4, 5-6, 11-12, 13](#)

Responsorial Psalm

R. (2a) **I will praise you, Lord, for you have rescued me.**

or:

R. **Alleluia.**

I will extol you, O LORD, for you drew me clear and did not let my enemies rejoice over me.

O LORD, you brought me up from the netherworld; you preserved me from among those going down into the pit.

R. **I will praise you, Lord, for you have rescued me.**

or:

R. **Alleluia.**

Sing praise to the LORD, you his faithful ones, and give thanks to his holy name.

For his anger lasts but a moment; a lifetime, his good will.

At nightfall, weeping enters in,
but with the dawn, rejoicing.

R. **I will praise you, Lord, for you have rescued me.**

or:

R. Alleluia.

Hear, O LORD, and have pity on me;

O LORD, be my helper.

You changed my mourning into dancing;

O LORD, my God, forever will I give you thanks.

R. I will praise you, Lord, for you have rescued me.

or:

R. Alleluia.

[Rev 5:11-14](#)

Reading 2

I, John, looked and heard the voices of many angels

who surrounded the throne

and the living creatures and the elders.

They were countless in number, and they cried out in a loud voice:

“Worthy is the Lamb that was slain

to receive power and riches, wisdom and strength,

honor and glory and blessing.”

Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth

and under the earth and in the sea,

everything in the universe, cry out:

“To the one who sits on the throne and to the Lamb

be blessing and honor, glory and might,

forever and ever.”

The four living creatures answered, “Amen, “

and the elders fell down and worshiped.

[Jn 21:1-19 or 21:1-14](#)

Gospel

At that time, Jesus revealed himself again to his disciples at the Sea of Tiberias.

He revealed himself in this way.

Together were Simon Peter, Thomas called Didymus,

Nathanael from Cana in Galilee,

Zebedee’s sons, and two others of his disciples.

Simon Peter said to them, “I am going fishing.”

They said to him, “We also will come with you.”

So they went out and got into the boat,

but that night they caught nothing.

When it was already dawn, Jesus was standing on the shore;

but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus.

Jesus said to them, “Children, have you caught anything to eat?”

They answered him, “No.”

So he said to them, “Cast the net over the right side of the boat and you will find something.”

So they cast it, and were not able to pull it in because of the number of fish.

So the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, “It is the Lord.”

When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he tucked in his garment, for he was lightly clad, and jumped into the sea.

The other disciples came in the boat, for they were not far from shore, only about a hundred yards, dragging the net with the fish.

When they climbed out on shore, they saw a charcoal fire with fish on it and bread.

Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish you just caught.”

So Simon Peter went over and dragged the net ashore full of one hundred fifty-three large fish.

Even though there were so many, the net was not torn.

Jesus said to them, “Come, have breakfast.”

And none of the disciples dared to ask him, “Who are you?” because they realized it was the Lord.

Jesus came over and took the bread and gave it to them, and in like manner the fish.

This was now the third time Jesus was revealed to his disciples after being raised from the dead.

When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?”

Simon Peter answered him, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.”

Jesus said to him, “Feed my lambs.”

He then said to Simon Peter a second time,

“Simon, son of John, do you love me?”

Simon Peter answered him, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.”

Jesus said to him, “Tend my sheep.”

Jesus said to him the third time,

“Simon, son of John, do you love me?”

Peter was distressed that Jesus had said to him a third time,

“Do you love me?” and he said to him,

“Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.”

Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep.

Amen, amen, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to dress yourself and go where you wanted; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.”

He said this signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God.

And when he had said this, he said to him, “Follow me.”