

## BONUS MEETING

# A CHILD'S PERFECT LOVE

### GATHER

#### OPENING PRAYER

Leader: You have spoken to us through your prophets – teach us to hear and heed your word.

All: Today we hear your voice, O Lord.

Leader: You have spoken to us through your Son and Word – teach us to hear and love your Word.

All: Today we hear your voice, O Lord.

Leader: You have spoken to us through the teachers of your Church – teach us to hear and keep your Word.

All: Today we hear your voice, O Lord.

O God, you have spoken your Word of love, your Son, into our world's deafness. Open our ears to hear; open our hearts to heed; open our will to obey, that we may proclaim the Good News with our lives. - Morning prayer, *Magnificat*, January 23, 2017

Today we seek your understanding, O Lord, as we look at the virtue of obedience. True love and true abandonment characterized the relationship between you and the Father. Help us to live to do the will of the Father, doing all that He commands and administering love to those under our authority. We pray this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever. Amen.

#### REPORT ON ACTIONS

#### SCRIPTURE REFLECTION

“I came down from heaven not to do my own will but the will of the one who sent me.” - John 6:38

“He humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross.” - Philippians 2:8

“He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them.” - Luke 2:51

“As the Father loves me, so I also love you. Remain in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and remain in his love. “I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and your joy may be complete. This is my commandment: love one another as I love you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends.” - John 15:9-13

1. Looking at the first three Scriptures, what characterized the relationship of Jesus with His heavenly Father? What did Jesus know about the heavenly Father? How did this carry over into his relationship with His earthly parents?
2. According to the Scripture from John, what are at least two of the fruits of obedience to the Father's commandments?

## SOCIAL INQUIRY

Jesus came to earth to teach us what it means to be a child who loves their parents. In addition to the Scriptures mentioned earlier which give us Christ's personal example, God gives us specific instruction in other passages from the Bible.

"Children, obey your parents [in the Lord], for this is right. "Honor your father and mother. This is the first commandment with a promise, "that it may go well with you and that you may have a long life on earth." Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up with the training and instruction of the Lord." - Ephesians 6:1-4

"Obey your leaders and defer to them, for they keep watch over you and will have to give an account, that they may fulfill their task with joy and not with sorrow, for that would be of no advantage to you."  
- Hebrews 13:17

"Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' but not do what I command?" - Luke 6:46

"The eminent Jesuit theologian Father John Anthony Hardon, in his helpful Pocket Catholic Dictionary, offered the following definition of obedience: "The moral virtue that inclines the will to comply with the will of another who has the right to command."

"...In his Summa Theologica, Saint Thomas Aquinas declared that God is to be obeyed in all things, while human authorities are to be obeyed in certain things. Father Hardon explained: "... obedience to God is without limit, whereas obedience to human beings is limited by higher laws that must not be transgressed, and by the competency or authority of the one who gives the orders."

- Msgr. Charles M. Mangan, "The Virtue of Obedience: Our Duty, Our Crown"

According to The Judicial Learning Center, "law is a crucial system that allows human society to function in a manner that is as safe, fair and profitable for as many people as possible. Obeying the law is not only beneficial to society as a whole, but it allows individuals to reap the protections of living in an orderly environment." <https://www.reference.com/government-politics/important-obey-law-ca89e9b1f7f04ea2>

"... Showing themselves obedient to the will of the Father in heaven, {parents} educate their children to fulfill God's law. Parents have the first responsibility for the education of their children. They bear witness to this responsibility first by *creating a home* where tenderness, forgiveness, respect, fidelity, and disinterested service are the rule. The home is well suited for *education in the virtues*. This requires an apprenticeship in self-denial, sound judgment, and self-mastery - the preconditions of all true freedom.

Parents should teach their children to subordinate the 'material and instinctual dimensions to interior and spiritual ones.' Parents have a grave responsibility to give good example to their children. By knowing how to acknowledge their own failings to their children, parents will be better able to guide and correct them." - Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2222 and 2223

As adult children of the Father, we can form ourselves in the virtue of obedience and model this for our children. Sometimes learning techniques, understanding developmental stages and being aware of current societal trends can help us as we work to train our children in the virtue of obedience. *Aha Parenting* gives eight reasons, from a child's perspective, why kids don't do what we say. "They don't share our priorities; we've trained them to not pay attention until we yell and threaten; they need our help to make the transition; their frontal cortex is still developing; they don't feel heard; they feel disconnected from us; they've given up on us; and they're human." This article also gives several solutions for helping improve the response of children.

[www.ahaparenting.com/blog/Obedience\\_Why\\_Do\\_You\\_Have\\_To\\_Tell\\_Them\\_Five\\_Times](http://www.ahaparenting.com/blog/Obedience_Why_Do_You_Have_To_Tell_Them_Five_Times)

God gives us all free will, and does not coerce or enforce obedience. With generous love and gentle correction God's desire for us is to choose to obey Him knowing He wants what is best for us. We too, must understand the free will of those under our authority. When called to administer authority, it must be honest, humble, loving and characterized by gentle strength. Obedience is not forced by the administrator, but chosen by the student.

Often the word "obedience" is given a negative connotation. The exercise of authority and the response of obedience is a relationship which can be either positive or negative. For Jesus, obedience was a relationship of willing and loving submission to the Father who loved Him. Love is the key.

From your own experience, OBSERVE:

1. Does the concept of obedience have a positive or negative connotation in today's culture? Ask a contemporary if they see a need for obedience and, if so, when?
2. What has been your experience with being under authority? Do you see any correlation between obedience and joy?
3. What is your experience in administering authority at home or at work? How is it received?
4. Share a story where an authority figure in your life encouraged you to do something you wouldn't have done otherwise. What was the result?
5. Share experiences or scenarios where noncompliance with civil laws has created chaos. Share experiences or scenarios where you believe civil disobedience to be appropriate.

In light of Christ's teachings, JUDGE:

1. How does having boundaries keep one safe? Can boundaries help one to grow and thrive?

2. Where was it that you learned “right” from “wrong”? Is this arbitrary?
3. How can being under authority while at the same time leading others affect leadership? Reflecting on the honor and responsibility experienced when someone chooses to submit their will to ours, what qualities are necessary to guide those under our authority?
4. When is an appropriate time not to be obedient?
5. The catechism mentions “the preconditions of all true freedom”. How are these conditions relevant in our culture and government as well as in the home?
6. How does a person’s age and maturity affect the method of training them in the virtue of obedience? Is there ever a time when it is too late to learn obedience?

ACT, as a group or individually:

*Ideally ACTs are inspired and identified through your discussion. The list below contains ideas that may be appropriate.*

1. Check your own attitude on the virtue of obedience. Look at the Scriptures, the Catechism, and the Magisterium with an open heart.
2. Seek guidance, learn new techniques, and pray specifically to grow in your ability to lovingly guide those under your authority so that they might experience the fruits of obedience which are freedom and joy. You might research Catholic/Christian sources on the topic of obedience or read the article from *Aha Parenting*.
3. Reflect on “the preconditions of all true freedom” cited in the Social Inquiry (Catechism 2222 and 2223). Create a plan of apprenticeship for your family.
4. Challenge yourself to think and speak positively of the freedom you experience as a result of your own submission to the will to God and to all those who lay down their lives for you.
5. There is value in counsel. Identify someone in your life who you trust has your best interest in mind. Seek their guidance when making decisions and administering authority. Consider seeking out a spiritual director. Ask your pastor for recommendations.

Our Action to be carried out and reported at the next meeting:

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#### OPTIONAL ACTIVITY

1. As a family (or families) make a chart for rules that are believed necessary to maintain order in your household. Consider whether any of them would require consequences for infractions. If so, consider what type of consequences would be appropriate.
2. Play the game “Mother/Father May I?”

AT HOME, DISCUSS AS A FAMILY

1. Name some examples of obedience in the Bible. Find Old Testament and New Testament Scripture passages that speak of obedience. In the Old Testament, you might begin with Abraham and Isaac, Moses, Noah or Job. In the New Testament, you might begin with Joseph, Mary or Jesus.
2. Why is obedience important or good? Who is it that we are called to "obey?" When would obedience be inappropriate? What should you do when you are asked to do something that you question whether it is right?
3. When do you find it most difficult to obey? In what way can directives and rules be communicated so as to improve the relationship between parents and children? What should the consequences be for disobedience? Should there be different consequences for different infractions?

LOOK AHEAD TO THE NEXT MEETING

*Take a look at the Observes for the next meeting to see what needs to be done in preparation*

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Time \_\_\_\_\_ Place \_\_\_\_\_

1. Phone or email host if you cannot attend
2. Look ahead at the Observe questions for the next meeting.
3. Who could you invite to join our group?

*If children have come to the meeting with their parents, gather them to join you in the closing prayer.*

CLOSING PRAYER

Jesus, you proclaim that "life finds its center, its meaning and its fulfillment when it is given up. ... We too are called to give up our lives for our brothers and sisters, and thus to realize in the fullness of truth the meaning and destiny of our existence. We shall be able to do this because you, O Lord, have given us the example and have bestowed on us the power of your Spirit. We shall be able to do this if every day, with you and like you, we are obedient to the Father and do his will. Grant, therefore, that we may listen with open and generous hearts to every word which proceeds from the mouth of God" (*Evangelium Vitae*, n. 51).

And let us pray the Prayer for the Christian Family Movement:

Holy Trinity, you are a family.

We believe you wish our families to reflect your heavenly community.

Jesus has called us to family ministry, and asked his heavenly Father not to take us from the world, but to deliver us from evil.

And so we pray for the Christian Family Movement,

that present members may grow in grace and that new families may join us.

Through good example and prayer, may our homes become that which you desire them to be: true domestic churches, temples of your glory, and schools of humanity, ushering in the reign of God.

Amen.

## WORKS CITED

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