

# Reflections

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## Authority and Obedience

A practical aspect on our journey to God is composed of a correct application of authority. This is an aspect which has been greatly affected by the Father-crisis in today's world. It has caused a crisis of authority everywhere.

### Mistaken concepts of authority

**A privilege.** For many, authority is simply a privilege. Authority is self-serving. That makes many do everything possible to achieve power because through it they can dominate others and become wealthy. Before achieving power, anything can be promised; later, when the promises are forgotten, the true face is shown. In the area of family, the same style of authority is used: the father of the family is a master who has all rights and privileges and the other members of the household must obey him. This concept, most certainly, has been the one which has most slandered the concept of authority.

**A heavy burden.** For others, authority is a heavy burden which is taken with a grudge and exercises a type of police force; there must be order and everyone and everything must be controlled. Everything must be under his/her personal control. To investigate, to repress, to order and to correct seem to be the words contained in authority.

**The right to order.** Many simply and plainly confuse authority with power, that is, with the right to dispose of others. It would seem as if authority would be confused with the power to order. The majority thinks that the one who orders is the one with the most authority.

The word authority brings two things to today's mentality: order and obedience. Authority appears as a limitation of freedom, and therefore, it has become hateful in our times which are more inclined toward freedom.

**The Gospel concept of authority: Service.** Jesus Christ presents the matter in a diametrically opposed way. He tells us: "Those who govern nations, rule them and call themselves benefactors. You should not be this way.....The one who wants to be first

He demonstrates His example saying that He did not come "to be served, but to serve." This means that He placed authority on the level of service. A flagrant contradiction exists between the Gospel concept of authority and the concept which rules in our times.

Etymologically, authority comes from the Latin word "augere" which means to make grow, to increase, to bring forth, to originate. From there comes "auctor esse" which means he/she who generates life in each one. Already in its origin, the word authority means service to life.

**Freedom and obedience.** A community cannot be fruitful without a spirit of obedience. It deals with seeing God behind all legitimate human authority. It means that I do not bow before the authority of a man or woman, but that I bow to the authority of God which is manifested in him or her. Therefore, obedience for the love of God. "Obedience motivated by love makes us free," assures Father Kentenich. The more we advance in this way, the freer we will feel interiorly.

**Obedience is the great sign of love.** Love proves its authenticity in obedience. Basically, it is the fusion of "me" with a "you." The proof that that fusion is not something sentimental is that it expresses itself in my desire to unite with his/her will. It is the children's great proof of love. It is Christ's basic attitude: "My food," Jesus said to them, "is to obey the will of the one who sent me." (JN 4:34) It is also the fundamental attitude of the Virgin Mary: "I am the Lord's servant," said Mary; "may it happen to me as you have said." (LK 1:38) Obedience, key attitude of Christ and Mary, is also the key attitude for all Christians.

### Questions for reflection

1. Is it easy for me to obey?
2. How do I act when I have authority?
3. How can we be different?

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