

Is disobedience a path of renewal for the Church?

The then Holy Father Pope Benedict XVI, while presiding over the Chrism mass on 5 April 2012, reacts to this question in response to a summons to disobedience made by a group of priests in Europe:

"Is disobedience a path of renewal for the Church? We would like to believe that the authors of this summons are motivated by concern for the Church, that they are convinced that the slow pace of institutions has to be overcome by drastic measures, in order to open up new paths and to bring the Church up to date. But is disobedience really a way to do this? Do we sense here anything of that configuration to Christ which is the precondition for all true renewal, or do we merely sense a desperate push to do something to change the Church in accordance with one's own preferences and ideas?

"But let us not oversimplify matters. Surely Christ Himself corrected human traditions which threatened to stifle the word and the will of God? Indeed He did, so as to rekindle obedience to the true will of God, to His ever enduring word. His concern was for true obedience, as opposed to human caprice. Nor must we forget: He was the Son, possessed of singular authority and responsibility to reveal the authentic will of God, so as to open up the path for God's word to the world of the nations. And finally: He lived out His task with obedience and humility all the way to the Cross, and so gave credibility to His mission. Not my will, but thine be done: these words reveal to us the Son, in His humility and His divinity, and they show us the true path.

"Let us ask again: do not such reflections serve simply to defend inertia, the fossilisation of traditions? No. Anyone who considers the history of the post-conciliar era can recognise the process of true renewal, which often took unexpected forms in living movements and made almost tangible the inexhaustible vitality of holy Church, the presence and effectiveness of the Holy Spirit. And if we look at the people from whom these fresh currents of life burst forth and continue to burst forth, then we see that this new fruitfulness requires being filled with the joy of faith, the radicalism of obedience, the dynamic of hope and the power of love".

"Dear friends, it is clear that configuration to Christ is the precondition and the basis for all renewal. But perhaps at times the figure of Jesus Christ seems too lofty and too great for us to dare to measure ourselves by him. The Lord knows this. So he has provided "translations" on a scale that is more accessible and closer to us. For this same reason, Saint Paul did not hesitate to say to his communities: Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ. For his disciples, he was a "translation" of Christ's manner of life that they could see and identify with. Ever since Paul's time, history has furnished a constant flow of

other such “translations” of Jesus’ way into historical figures. We priests can call to mind a great throng of holy priests who have gone before us and shown us the way: from Polycarp of Smyrna and Ignatius of Antioch, from the great pastors Ambrose, Augustine and Gregory the Great, through to Ignatius of Loyola, Charles Borromeo, John Mary Vianney and the priest-martyrs of the 20th century, and finally Pope John Paul II, who gave us an example, through his activity and his suffering, of configuration to Christ as “gift and mystery”. The saints show us how renewal works and how we can place ourselves at its service. And they help us realize that God is not concerned so much with great numbers and with outward successes, but achieves his victories under the humble sign of the mustard seed."

Pope Benedict XVI

https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/homilies/2012/documents/hf_ben-xvi_hom_20120405_messa-crismale.pdf