The Fatima Message and the Problem of False Obedience

We reprint here a timely excerpt of Father Gruner’s seminal article on the danger of False Obedience in light of the warnings of Our Lady of Fatima.

Since the time of the article’s first publication in the Fall of 2010 (five years into the reign of Pope Benedict XVI), Father’s words have taken on an ever greater force and application, seemingly beyond all human expectations. One can only wonder if even Father Gruner could have imagined the tragic and astonishing ways in which his reference to “the moral chaos of our time” would apply to us today, a mere seven years later, as the Church’s current leadership purports to dispense the faithful from the requirements of even the divine and natural law, admitting unrepentant public adulterers to Sacraments of the Living, including Holy Communion – something no Pope has any authority to do.

We are blessed now more than ever to have the following admonition from Father Gruner, who thus continues to guide us in these exceedingly stormy and dangerous times. (See the entire article on The Fatima Center’s website at http://www.fatima.org/news/newsviews/newsviews090910.pdf)

by Father Nicholas Gruner, B.Comm., S.T.L., S.T.D. (Cand.)

The Role of False Obedience in the Post-Conciliar Crisis

Since Vatican II there has been an unprecedented division of the Church into warring camps that hoist their respective flags behind impenetrable fortifications. The emergence of these camps is the direct result of the supposed “new orientation” of the Church since the Council — a mirage, of course, but one that has provoked terrible damage in the Church. The very existence of a previously unheard-of distinction between Novus Ordo and “traditionalist” Catholics tells us that the “reforms” of Vatican II have caused a disastrous quasi-schism within the Church itself.

Now, the “traditionalists” are simply the Catholics who did not change, whereas the leaders of
the Novus Ordo constituency defend the novelties of the past forty years as though they were defined dogmas of the Faith, even though Pope Benedict has exposed the utter fraudulence of this posture by declaring that the ancient Mass was “never abrogated” and that its use by every priest in the Church was “always permitted.”

The imposition of these novelties upon the Church – and with it, “official” opposition to the Message of Fatima – has depended precisely on a false notion of obedience to ecclesiastical authority. None other than the present Pope himself [at that time Benedict XVI] exposed this false notion when he was still Cardinal Ratzinger:

“The pope is not an absolute monarch whose will is law, but is the guardian of the authentic Tradition, and thereby the premier guarantor of obedience. ... That is why, with respect to the Liturgy, he has the task of a gardener, not that of a technician who builds new machines and throws the old ones onto the junk-pile. ...”

Here Cardinal Ratzinger was commenting on what even the new Catechism declares: that “even the supreme authority in the Church may not change the Liturgy arbitrarily, but only in the obedience of faith and with religious respect for the mystery of the Liturgy.” ¹ (CCC, No. 1125, p. 256)

And what is true of the Pope – that his power and authority are limited by the obedience of faith – is all the more true of his subordinates. Yet, in their ranks, the obedience of faith has widely been replaced in the post-conciliar epoch by obedience to their authority for its own sake. Positivism (my will is law) and nominalism (what I will is good because I will it) have invaded the Church, cloaking their abuses in the virtue of obedience, which seems to have become the only virtue insisted upon by ecclesiastical authority.

It is no coincidence that this invasion of the Church by positivism and nominalism coincides with “the invasion of the Church by worldly thinking” that Paul VI lamented – but too late, for the “opening to the world” had already begun to inflict its incalculable damage, and the “smoke of Satan” he also belatedly lamented had already entered the Church through the “fissures” he noticed only after the smoke had entered.
True Obedience:
The Obedience of Faith

Of course, what is true of the Liturgy is true of everything else in the Church: there is an obedience of faith higher than obedience to men, higher even than obedience to the Pope, as the reigning Pope has observed. As the first Pope also observed, “We ought to obey God, rather than men.” (Acts 5:29)

Indeed, all authority is derived from divine authority, for if there were no God, there would be no ground on which any man could stand to assert authority over another, but only various “social contracts” resting on “consent.” All authority on earth, both temporal and spiritual – from the parent to the policeman to the politician, from the priest to the prelate to the Pope – is ultimately derived from divine authority. All who exercise authority of whatsoever kind, even papal authority, must exercise that authority in conformity with the divine will. And all who obey authority of whatsoever kind must obey divine authority first.

The failure to recognize and acknowledge the obedience which is absolutely due to God above all human authority is what is wrong with the modern notion of authority. It accounts for the moral, political, and social chaos of our time. And that same chaos, as Paul VI lamented too late, has infected even the human element of the Church, producing the paradoxical situation of demands to respect “authority” that contravenes the very basis of all true authority: the divine will for man.

Now, since all authority comes from God, we obey men because – and only because – their authority ultimately is based upon God’s authority. And this obedience, where it does not contravene God’s law, is actually an act of justice – of giving to another, and ultimately to God, what is due. But God does not give any man the authority to command, nor anyone the right to obey a command, that contravenes the commands He has given us, including the Decalogue and the law of the Gospel, which is the “positive law” of Christ the King. Moreover, all authority on earth is limited by God’s decree. Not even the Pope has unlimited authority. We know the limitation of the Pope’s authority by Revelation, Scripture, Tradition, and the teachings of the authentic Magisterium, both Ordinary and Universal, as well as the Extraordinary Magisterium in its dogmatic definitions.
The Obedience of Faith and the Message of Fatima

As St. Augustine says, “God is order”. Therefore, there is a hierarchy of authority. The command of the higher authority – when he is within the ambit of his jurisdiction – supersedes the command of the lower authority. There is a hierarchy of angels, a hierarchy of being in nature and a hierarchy of authority in the Church. Our Lady’s authority, after that of Her Divine Son, is the highest authority in the Church and the world. It must be noted that the Blessed Virgin Mary, as Queen of Heaven and Earth and Mother of all the living, has real maternal and royal authority over each one of us, every member of the human race, and particularly every Catholic, including each and every priest, bishop, and Cardinal, and finally the Pope himself.

On October 13, 1917, the Queen of Heaven and Earth commanded the sun, and even the sun obeyed Her. So must all Her children, no matter what their rank in the Church. The Message of Fatima, with its prescriptions for the Church, is precisely an exercise of Her authority over the entire Church, the Pope included. It is impossible for the sinless and ever Virgin Mother of God, possessed of the Beatific Vision in a unique and unequalled way, to abuse or exceed Her authority. Therefore, when She commands, we must obey. Even the Pope must obey Her. Hence obedience to the Message of Fatima, which means obedience to the Mother of God, is subsumed under the concept of the obedience of faith binding even the Pope to act for the faith, for the salvation of souls, above all else. Which brings me to the question of the Third Secret in particular and its relation to the problem of false obedience.

Faith Versus Obedience Regarding the Third Secret

Now, we know with certainty that the missing text of the Secret – the one that is “well hidden” in the Vatican – involves the famous words of Our Lady recorded in Sister Lucia’s Fourth Memoir: “In Portugal, the dogma of the Faith will always be preserved etc.” And we know that an Austrian Jesuit, Father Joseph Schweigl, sent on a mission by Pius XII to interrogate Sister Lucia concerning the contents of the Secret in 1952, revealed that the Secret, “has two parts: One concerns the Pope. The other, logically – although I must say nothing – would
have to be the continuation of the words: ‘In Portugal, the dogma of the Faith will always be preserved’. ”

Thus, we know that the text comprising the missing second part of the Third Secret records precious words of the Virgin for which Sister Lucia held the place with her “etc.”

But the Vatican Secretary of State, Cardinal Bertone, continues to maintain the fiction that the “not easy to decipher” vision of the “Bishop dressed in White,” which has received a welter of conflicting interpretations, is all there is to the Third Secret of Fatima. He steadfastly and most tellingly refused to inquire of Sister Lucia regarding the momentous “etc” even though he had every opportunity to do so over the five years of controversy that raged from the time the vision was published in 2000 – to widespread skepticism about the completeness of the Vatican’s disclosure – until Sister Lucia’s death in 2005. Or perhaps he did inquire and is in possession of information he has deemed expedient not to reveal.

Now, however, the partisans of a false and blind obedience to authority counsel us to forget the very words of the Mother of God because a Vatican functionary has deemed them dispensable. One such spokesman, Antonio Borelli of Tradition, Family and Property (TFP), who professes to be a champion of Our Lady of Fatima, declares that the words embraced by that telltale “etc” “will remain forever an inexplicable mystery” and that

Father Gruner on YouTube, teaching the promise of the Brown Scapular: “Whosoever dies clothed in the Brown Scapular shall not suffer eternal fire.”

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“It is a great disappointment that it has not been possible to resolve the question of the ‘etc.’ but we have to work with that concrete unavoidable fact.” Really? And why is that?

According to Mr. Borelli the answer is: simply and only because a human authority will have it so. And a human authority, moreover, who has no authority in the matter, as the Vatican Secretariat of State is a creation of men not God, and is in no way part of the divine constitution of the Church. Indeed, Pius XII dispensed with the office during his pontificate.

It was when he was serving as Secretary of State under Pius XI that the future Pius XII made the startling and prophetic statement:

“I am worried by the Blessed Virgin’s messages to little Lucia of Fatima. This persistence of Mary about the dangers which menace the Church is a divine warning against the suicide of altering the faith, in her liturgy, her theology and her soul ... I hear all around me innovators who wish to dismantle the Sacred Chapel, destroy the universal flame of the Church, reject her ornaments and make her feel remorse for her historical past.”

“A day will come when the civilized world will deny its God, when the Church will doubt as Peter doubted. She will be tempted to believe that man has become God. In our churches, Christians will search in vain for the red lamp where God awaits them. Like Mary Magdalene, weeping before the empty tomb, they will ask, ‘Where have they taken Him?’”

It seems more than probable that the very catastrophe the future Pius XII foresaw is predicted in great detail by the words of the Virgin of Fatima to be found within that troublesome “etc.” But the partisans of false obedience argue that we must put the matter out of our minds to suit the wishes of Cardinal Bertone and all those who have no authority to conceal any part of the Message of Fatima.