

The Joy Of Saying Yes **by Tony Micallef ocds**

When we think of the promise of obedience which we make as secular Carmelites, we realize that like everything else that comes with our vocation, it is a gift and a grace of God. Obedience is an instrument and a path to freedom. Unlike impulsive responses to the dictates of the world, the flesh and the devil, which tend to enslave us, obedience to God and the Church is in itself liberating. "For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." It is the way to freedom, joy and peace.

In the Precautions of St. John of the Cross we read that the soul seeking perfection should not take on any endeavours out of its ordinary duties before seeking the advice of the superior. Now all that St. John of the Cross wrote refers to souls seeking to be perfect, how they behave and how they react and respond to the events that God puts into their lives. In this sense St. John of the Cross is also talking about Jesus and Mary and Joseph in the house of Nazareth. In that Holy house obedience to the will of God reigned supreme, bringing peace, serenity and joy. The joy of saying yes to God who desires only what is best for His children. In the Gospel of Luke we encounter an episode in the hidden life of our Lord: Jesus is twelve years old, an age when a boy becomes a man, making his own decisions. Joseph, Mary and Jesus go on the annual pilgrimage to the temple in Jerusalem, and when it is over, Jesus stays behind. The parents think they lost Him so they search for Him for three days. And when they find Him, He answers their concerns with the words: "Do you not know that I have to be in my Father's house?" This is the moment when Jesus, at the age of decision says yes to His vocation and lets His parents know that He has accepted the Father's call. It is a moment of joy (a joyful mystery) because God's plan moves a step closer to realization and fulfillment.

Yet Jesus humbly returns home to Nazareth serving and obeying His parents for many years, and, it seems to me, waiting for their permission before stepping out into His public ministry that would eventually lead Him to the cross.

It is inspiring to think that He waited for His Mother to give Him the sign to begin His ministry. In the Gospel of John we find her ready. She urges Him to help in the wedding of Cana by providing the missing wine. And He so humbly and so obediently says yes, manifesting His glory. There is joy and peace in obedience, and an assurance that we are doing God's will.

Free from the rebellion
with which sinners are beset.
Jesus obeyed His parents
in the house of Nazareth.

He learned the skill of tradesman
as St. Joseph humbly taught.
And to the world of commerce
honest work and peace He brought.

And following His mother,
He pondered in His heart.
How the words the angel told her
would one day His future chart.

O that I would heed, dear Jesus,
the example that You set
through the practice of obedience
in the house of Nazareth!

So lovingly You treasured
with perfection and success.
The command the Father gave You
and the joy of saying yes.

