



THE HOLY RULE OF OUR MOST HOLY FATHER BENEDICT
OF OBEDIENCE

Chapter 5

The first degree of humility is obedience without delay. This becometh those who hold nothing dearer to them than Christ. Because of the holy service which they have professed, the fear of hell, and the glory of life everlasting, as soon as anything has been ordered by the superior, they receive it as a divine command and cannot suffer any delay in executing it. Of these doth the Lord say: "He hath listened to me and hath obeyed me." And again He saith to teachers: "He who listens to you, listens to Me."

Such as these, therefore, immediately abandoning their own affairs and forsaking their own will, dropping the work they were engaged on and leaving it unfinished, with swift obedience follow up with their deeds the voice of him who commands them. And almost in the same moment of time that the master's order is issued, is the disciple's work completed, in the swiftness of the fear of the Lord; the two things being rapidly accomplished together by those who are impelled by the desire of attaining life everlasting. Therefore they choose the narrow way, according to the Lord's words: "Narrow is the way which leadeth unto life"; so that not living by their own will, and obeying their own desires and passions, but walking by another's judgement and orders, they dwell in monasteries, and desire to have an abbot over them. Assuredly such as these imitate the saying of the Lord wherein He saith: "I came not to do my own will, but the will of Him Who sent me."

But this obedience itself will then be acceptable to God and pleasing to men, if what is commanded be not done timorously, or tardily, or tepidly, nor with murmuring or the raising of objections. For the obedience which is given to superiors is given to God, since He Himself said: "He who listens to you, listens to Me." And disciples should give their obedience with a good will, because "God loveth a cheerful giver." For if the disciple obey with an ill will, and murmur not only in words but even in his heart, then even though he fulfil the command, his work will not be acceptable to God, Who sees that his heart is murmuring. For work such as this he will gain no reward; nay, rather, he will incur the punishment due to murmurers, unless he amend and make reparation.