

The Navigator



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A Disciplined Faith: Submission

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*"Nevertheless not what I will,
but what Thou wilt."*

Mark 14:36

We have taken a challenging journey over the past two years to examine the classic disciplines of faith; specifically those disciplines that appear in Saint Brendan's *Rule of Life*. We have worked through all the interior disciplines and now we are examining the exterior disciplines (and the corporate disciplines still await us). In this edition of *The Navigator*, we turn our attention to the external discipline of submission. Did you smile or did you groan? Hmm, let's see where this takes us.

Freedom and personal liberty have long been guaranteed as 'rights' of our citizenship. Some commentators have referred to these as the ingredients of our American "rugged individualism" or the components of our "fierce independence." And like most everything else that seems good on the surface, this same sense of independence has crept into many of our churches and even into our understanding of what it means to be a Christian. Unfortunately, it comes into direct conflict with the ancient Christian discipline of submission.

Truth be told, the idea of submission holds very little appeal to our human nature. One good example is the engaged couple who will go out of their way to find a pastor who will not only accommodate but *celebrate* their decision to scrub even the slightest hint of submission from their wedding vows (and this happens more often that you can imagine!). I'm sure you can think of lots of other examples. Our society seems to be built on catch-phrases like "what I want when I want it" and our vocabulary is studded with constant inclusions of "me, my, and mine." We live in an increasingly self-centered culture where submission is nothing more than an archaic notion, completely obsolete, and (even among many Christians) anathema.



What is submission? As Saint Brendan's *Rule of Life* states, submission is first and foremost a state of being between two people; a motivational dynamic for how we relate to one another. It is the means by which we willingly and voluntarily yield ourselves as the servant, the student, or the 'lesser' in a relationship. When necessary, submission even compels us to take the place of the 'sufferer' so that the other won't have to.

The goal of submission is to lay down the emotional addiction of always needing to have our own way. You see, to insist that everything must happen our way, or to believe that everything must serve our purpose, is one of the greatest bondages we face and, quite frankly, it is a terrible bondage to belong to

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one's self. Only through submission are we brought to a place where the spirit of self-will is starved out, making it powerless to control us.

A biblical 'spirit' of submission (a polar opposite of such sinful spirits as lust, greed, envy, and spite) governs how we view and interact with those around us. Biblical submission is the attitude and practice of mutual subordination (Ephesians 5:21). Biblical submission is a vital ingredient in learning how to value



other people by giving up our own rights for the good and edification of others (cf., Philippians 2:3).

At the very heart of biblical submission is self-denial (cf. Mark 8:34); the ac-

knowledge that our way is not the most important way and that our happiness is not dependent upon getting what we want. This is not the same thing as self-contempt or self-hatred. In fact, submission helps us to discover who we truly are in the Lord because the exercise of submission stands as a safety shield against the false and demonically charged spirit of self-indulgence.

In a surprising upside-down sort of way, submission is also the fountainhead of graceful power. Heavenly leadership flows out from servanthood and heavenly authority is the end result of meekness. Jesus Himself exemplifies how the greatest positions of privilege and status come as the result of willing subordination (cf., 2 Corinthians 8:9; Matthew 20:26-28; Philippians 2:5-11). Consequently, when every Christian chooses to live in submission to Christ and to one other (this, by the way, should be the obligatory posture of every Christian heart), only then will the Church be able to exercise a truly godly influence on the secular community which surrounds it.

Finally, don't be lulled into thinking that you have perfected the discipline of submission simply because you have obeyed a parent, or done something nice for a spouse, or even tried to practice a biblical command of Jesus. We must allow the discipline of submission to radically alter our spiritual DNA as we yield ourselves—*all the time*—to those things which God has ordained. These include submission to the Triune God; to the whole counsel of Scripture; to our families; to our neighbors and those with whom we come in daily contact; to our local believing community (the Body of Christ); to the broken, despised, helpless, and undefended; and to those who are in spiritual authority over us, as both an expression of our inner humility and to strive toward the greater imitation of Christ who **"made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and...humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death"** (Philippians 2:7-8).

In the next edition of *The Navigator*, we will examine the external discipline of service (or servanthood).

Rejoice!

Fr. Alan Andraeas



MONASTIC MUSE

muse \ 'myüz \ **1:** *vb* to turn something over in the mind meditatively, **2:** to think reflectively, **3:** *n* a state of deep thought...

God being Who and What He is, and we being who and what we are, the only thinkable relation between us is one of full lordship on His part and complete submission on ours.

—A. W. Tozer (1897—1963), *The Pursuit of God*
Christian & Missionary Alliance pastor, speaker, writer, and editor

Who Drives YOUR Fiat?

Sue Andraeas

Then after being ministered to by Ananias and visiting with the disciples, [Paul] withdrew to converse with Christ for three years in the isolation of the Arabian Desert.

Galatians 1:15-16

Meet Baily, the new puppy at Saint Brendan's. Baily is a rescue dog from Texas; a Belgian Shepherd mix. The breed's name is officially a Belgian Malinois or, as my sister calls them, Malinuts. Here's what the American Kennel Club has to say about the breed (and my interpretation): *Smart* (independent thinkers—training is a MUST), *High Energy* (exercise them or they will dig up your lawn and eat your furniture), have a *Strong Prey Drive* (if you do not like to play 'fetch,' don't even think of getting this breed), *Confident* (will challenge your authority at every turn), and *Hard Working* (give them something to do or you're going to be playing 'fetch' for a long, long time). I know what your next question is going to be. "WHY do you have such a dog?" The answer is because I like smart, hard-working, fetch dogs! I see a lot of myself in this breed; the need for consistency and to earn their trust and confidence.

Baily has been here now for about two months. She arrived not knowing any commands. We changed her name (from Suriya), so she didn't even know that. She didn't have much experience with leashes or with snow, and was used to being in a 'pack' of over a dozen dogs. We put a leash on her, changed her name, took her out into a snowy winter day, and brought her to a dog-less house. Talk about culture shock! Now, eight weeks later, she's got a working vocabulary of about 20 words/phrases, has adapted to snow, mud, goats, chickens (*aka* squeak toys... we try not to let her 'squeak' them too much), donkeys (and hooves), visitors, church in her house, and she's well on her way through obedience training. I like smart dogs. I like the challenge. (Right now, she is trying to get on my desk and 'help' me type. I'm deleting her words...)

I'm going to switch gears for a moment, and then we'll come back to Baily. Ethics. I took an ethics course several decades ago, and just loved the section where we studied morality. We took a simple action—following the speed limit while driving through a housing development—and tried to think of all the reasons someone would do that. We then took those reasons

and rated them on a scale from least moral to most moral. The least moral reason to drive the speed limit was in order to avoid getting a ticket; fear of punishment. Reasons in the middle ranged from setting a good example for others in the vehicle, trying to impress others in the vehicle, wanting to avoid doing harm to potential pedestrians, simply out of habit (I put this one much lower on the scale than others in the class), and because we drive an old car and it can't go any faster. The most moral choice was because the driver had considered all speed options and agreed with the authorities who set the speed limit as its being the safest and most responsible thing for all concerned. Each one of these drivers is maintaining the speed limit. All of their actions are 'good.' But their reasons for being 'good' are diverse and some more noble than others. Agreed? Back to Baily.

Baily listens *well* when I've got her on a leash. She listens even *better* when she's in the house, where I can easily grab her by the collar and 'help' her do what I want. She listens *best* when I put her shock collar on her (it has a controller that allows me to instantly give her feedback with 'good girl' tones and 'bad girl' tones—and then there's the button that allows me to give her a mild shock; an instant attention-getter!). BUT... if I let her outside, without her shock collar, and there's a chicken loose (or a baby goat running around), chances of her even being aware that I'm giving her a command is slim to none. She is, once again, her own boss; her morality level is directly related to proximity and fear of punishment. She has not yet learned loyalty to me. She has not learned submission.



Ah, and there's the crux of the whole matter, isn't it? Baily is only a puppy, but she's starting to understand what is expected of her AND, even more importantly, she's beginning to sense that I want authority over her own free will. She is compliant when on a leash or in the house. She is obedient—out of fear—when she's got that collar on. But submission? Out of nothing but her love and loyalty to me? We're working on it, and she'll get there.

Why are we, as Christians, obedient to God? ARE we obedient? Is it because we love Him? Is it because we're afraid of Him? Or afraid of hell? Is it because we've been taught to be obedient and have never questioned that training?

Do you know what a fiat is? I don't mean the Italian cars. I mean, for example, the fiat of St. Mary? Mary, when the angel Gabriel came to her and told her that she was to bear God's Son, submitted. She said, "Be it unto me according to thy word" (Luke 1:38). This has always confused me some, because the definition I learned in school for 'fiat' is, 'an official order that is given by someone in power; an order that must be followed.' When this word was used to describe Mary's response

“Without submission, we do not belong to God. Without submission, Christ cannot Have His way in our life. Without submission, we belong to ourselves.”

to the angel, I thought, perhaps, the *fiat* was God’s request. The *fiat*, HIS statement that Mary should be the Mother of Jesus, was the order that must be followed because HE is the Supreme Authority. But Mary did

have a choice, didn’t she? Of course! Yet, Mary’s response didn’t seem to be a *fiat* either. She was not an authority; she had no power. She was a young maiden still living under her parents’ roof, betrothed to a man not of her own choice! What power and authority did SHE have!?

She actually had a lot. She had authority over her own will. God was looking for a human vessel willing to do what He asked—

not out of habit or fear, not agreeing but with the right to change her mind. He was looking for someone to bend totally to His will. If she had said, “NO!” to God’s request—on any level of morality—He would have had to find another mother for His Son! God will not usurp us when we elect our own will to be our god. I would have to say that having the power to say ‘no’ to God is power indeed! In her submission, with her approval to allow God to be God, she relinquished her power over her own will, her own life, her own destiny, and placed her whole future in His hands. Submission is not a sign of weakness or powerlessness. It is the ultimate power that a human being has; the power of determining our own eternal future! Submission, then, is at the very



core of our discipleship because submission is what causes us to step away from the throne of our heart and put another Power in charge. Without submission, we do not belong to God. Without submission, Christ cannot have His way in our life. Without submission, we belong to ourselves.

Back to Baily. And speeding. Baily and I continue to work out who is in charge of her life. Of course, we both know that she is—but she’s learning that it’s okay to let me decide what she does. This submission requires trust on her part, and love on mine. Our submitting to God requires the same things. God IS love; and it is safer for us to submit to Him than to trust our own decisions. But we, like Baily, tend to want to test that trust. And sometimes, events in our lives allow us to lose our focus and we, once again, put ourselves on the throne of our heart. Just yesterday I decided my life was totally out of control and, in the middle of a mental temper tantrum while driving Alan through our local Native American reservation, I was driving 22 miles over the speed limit. And I got pulled over by not one but two police cars (one from the Reservation and one from the town where I was headed; I was right on the dividing line between the two municipalities). I deserved a ticket—a \$247 ticket! What I got was mercy. What a great reminder that the Lord forgives. What a great reminder to get OFF that throne and allow God back on it!! Submission is not a once-and-done choice. It is a one-time choice that is tested, refined, forgotten, reinstated, worked out and lived less than perfectly while we are here on earth. But we have St. Mary (and I have a malinut named Baily) to remind us to keep at it!

Rejoice!
Sue



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**Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way!
Thou art the Potter, I am the clay.
Mold me and make me after Thy will,
While I am waiting, yielded and still.**

"Have Thine Own Way" -- Text, Adelaide A. Pollard; Music, George C. Stebbins

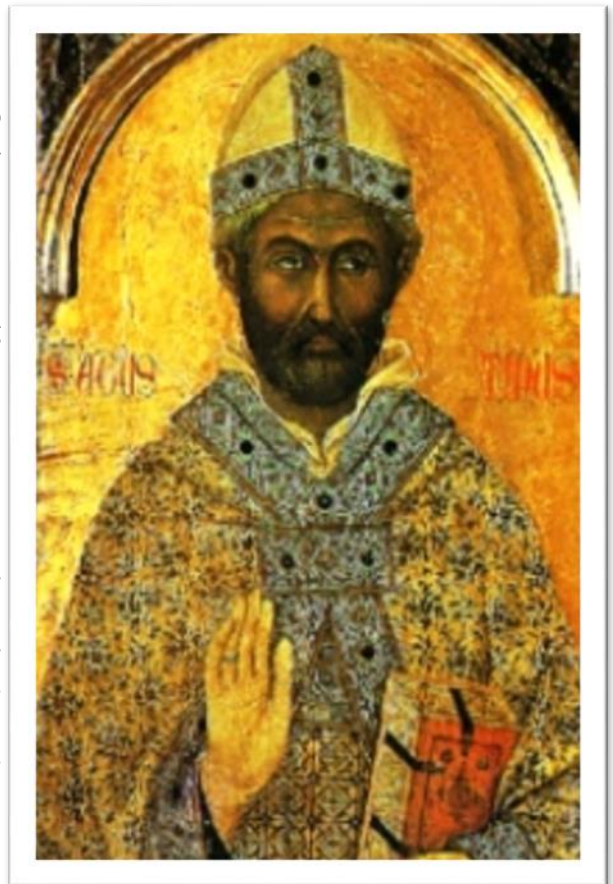
The Final Word: Saint Augustine — Bishop of Hippo, North Africa (c. 430 AD)
from his *Commentary on John*

The Lord, the teacher of love, full of love, came in person as had been foretold of Him, and showed that the law and the prophets are summed up in two commandments of love. Call to mind what these two commandments are. They ought to be very familiar to you; they should not only spring to mind when I mention them, but ought never to be absent from your hearts. Keep always in mind that we must love God and our neighbor: "Love God with your whole heart, your whole soul, and your whole mind, and your neighbor as yourself."

These two commandments must be always in your thoughts and in your hearts, treasured, acted on, fulfilled. Love of God is the first to be commanded, but love of neighbor is the first to be put into practice. In giving two commandments of love Christ would not commend to you first your neighbor and then God, but first God and then your neighbor. Since you do not yet see God, you merit the vision of God by loving your neighbor. By loving your neighbor you prepare your eye to see God: Saint John says clearly, "If you do not love your neighbor whom you can see, how will you love God whom you do not see!"

Consider what is said to you: Love God. If you say to me: Show me whom I am to love, what shall I say if not what Saint John says: "No one has ever seen God!" But in case you think that you are completely cut off from the sight of God, he says: "God is love, and you who remain in love remain in God." Love your neighbor, then, and see within yourself the power by which you love your neighbor; there you will see God, as far as you are able. Begin, then, to love your neighbor. "Break your bread to feed the hungry, and bring into your home the homeless poor; if you see someone naked, clothe them, and do not look down on your own flesh and blood."

What will you gain by doing this? "Your light will then burst forth like the dawn." Your light is your God; God is your 'dawn,' for He will come to you when the night of time is over. God does not rise or set but remains for ever. In loving your neighbor and caring for others, you are on a journey. Where are you traveling if not the Lord God, to Him Whom we should love with our whole heart, our whole soul, our whole mind? We have not yet reached His presence, but we have our neighbor at our side. Support, then, this companion of your pilgrimage if you want to come into the presence of the one with Whom you desire to remain for ever.



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