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Roots

Extracts on Obedience from the Letters of St. Ignatius

The spiritual teachings of St. Ignatius of Loyola are predominantly found in his letters. These letters are highly esteemed by Jesuits as a vital source of their spirituality. Especially noteworthy are his letters to fellow Jesuits, which go beyond offering spiritual guidance and provide insight into Ignatius' personal connections with his contemporaries. These letters not only communicate Ignatius' teachings but also showcase his profound affection and sincere interest in those who joined him on the journey toward Christ. They serve as the most compelling representation of the love Ignatius held for those who decided to accompany him on the path to Christ.

The collection includes fifty letters and instructions, covering in-depth insights about perfection, obedience, and the fruits of poverty. These writings go beyond being simple letters, functioning as brief treatises on these particular subjects. Moreover, Ignatius' counsel on dealing with others is also integrated into the compilation.

In this article, we will look into the letter - **To Father Giovanni Battista Viola - On Obedience.**

In the letter to Father Viola, St. Ignatius speaks of the complete obedience that one should practice to receive the bountiful grace of the Creator.

The Original Lines of St. Ignatius

"Now, it seems to me that obedience seeks to be blind and is blind in two ways: in the first, it belongs to the inferior to submit his understanding, when there is no question of sin, and to do what is commanded of him; in the second it is also the inferior's duty, once the superior commands or has commanded something, to represent to the superior whatever considerations or disadvantages may occur to him, and to do so humbly and simply, without any attempt to draw the superior to either side, so that afterward he can follow, with peace of mind, the way pointed out to him or commanded."

The obedience mentioned by St. Ignatius is found so contemporary in today's business context. In the VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous), perceptions of obedience have experienced significant shifts. Conventional ideas tied to obedience, often linked with hierarchical structures and unquestioning compliance, are undergoing re-evaluation as organisations and societies confront the challenges of a rapidly changing and unpredictable environment.