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I have chosen the first situation from the CIB questions for my reflection. This question says:

“Obey the orders of the abbot unreservedly, even if his own conduct – which God forbid – be at odds with what he says. Remember the teaching of the Lord: ‘do what they say, not what they do.’” (RB 4:59-61)

The command of the Superior who does not do what she says can definitely create a conflict among the community members. How then can a superior instill in the sisters the “listening with the ear of the heart” attitude when her conduct does not correspond with what she says?

Chapter 2 of Saint Benedict’s rule: *What kind of person the abbot ought to be* teaches us that an Abbot who is worthy to be over a monastery should always remember what he is called and live up to the name of Superior. The command of the Superior who does not do what he says can definitely create a conflict among the community members

If the Superior notes a discontent among the sisters and she knows that her conduct does not correspond with what she says, she should think about this and she should admit that she was mistaken. She should gather and discuss fraternally the conflict with her sisters to solve this situation before it becomes worse. Each sister could explain how she feels when she notices that the conduct of her superior does not correspond with what she says. It is not always easy to admit our mistakes.

In order to strengthen confidence among the members of the community and to promote the solidarity among the sisters, so that there is openness and freedom to share her point of view; the members are invited to listen with the ear of her heart. That is to say, not make rash judgments. We should reflect on what is heard and try to understand another person with love before answering.

In the prologue of The Rule of Benedict we found this invitation, and Saint Benedict adds the value of obedience in order not to isolate themselves and to look for an easy and comfortable exit.

We live in an age where many men and women live isolated due to the worship of the “ego”. And slogans like, I CAN, I HAVE, I WANT. This leads them to seek an artificial happiness. But, although they have, they can and they want, they cannot reach peace because peace belongs to the soul and the soul belongs only to God. There is a Latino-American song that says in one of its verses: “Only what is

cheap is bought with money.” What do I want 10 for if I know how to count up to 6.” And the chorus reply, “My poor little patron. He thinks that I am poor”¹

As religious women in this *here* and *now*, we have to be up to date with the constant changes of our society. But, at the same time, we have to be aware to keep our Benedictine values and to be firm to the teachings of our founders. Before any situation that is presented, to listen with the ear of the heart. “I shall give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you. I shall remove your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.” (Ez 36: 26)

Responding to what we have heard, we have to show harmony between what is heard and the expression of our face. At times our expression reflects indifference, absence, worry, doubt. On the contrary, our whole being must be bearers of peace and hope.

¹ The original says: “Solamente lo barato se compra con el dinero. Para qué yo quiero diez si sé contar hasta seis” And the chorus reply: “Pobrecito, mi patrón, piensa que el pobre soy yo.”