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## Introduction

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## INTRODUCTION

**D**eepening our Spiritan identity demands, among other things, a deepening of our religious life. A few years ago, the General Council published a document on the Vow of Chastity and, more recently, another on the Vow of Poverty. Now it is a question of reflecting on the vow of obedience. A preliminary consultation allowed us to gather together some very valuable contributions from many confreres and thus to propose this document.

We no longer live in an era where it is sufficient merely to give an order for it to be carried out. Our founders, Claude Poullart des Places and Francis Libermann, along with others of their own time, shared a more rigid understanding of obedience. It was not the thing to discuss but one had to “submit”. Such language would not be acceptable today even though the hierarchical structures at the heart of some enterprises are not always conducive to dialogue! However, a religious congregation is not a business enterprise. It is also time to reflect on how religious obedience is facing up to the winds of individualism and freedom which are blowing in every direction.<sup>1</sup> Does obedience still have any meaning in such an environment?

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. *The Service of Authority and Obedience*, a document published on the 11/05/2008 by the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life. This issue of *Anima Una* owes a lot to this document. The document *Consecrated Life* is also very useful here; it was the Post-Synodal Exhortation published in Rome in 1996, especially from no.84 to no.95. See also *Beginning with Christ* published on the 19/05/2002 by the same Congregation.

