Ignatius of Loyola's "Rules for Thinking with the Church"

As leaders of the Counter-Reformation, the Jesuits attempted to live by and instill in others the strictest obedience to church authority. The following are some of the eighteen rules included by Ignatius in his Spiritual Exercises to give pious Catholics positive direction. These rules also indicate the Catholic reformers' refusal to compromise with Protestants.

In order to have the proper attitude of mind in the Church Militant we should observe the following rules:

1. Putting aside all private judgment, we should keep our minds prepared and ready to obey promptly and in all things the true spouse of Christ our Lord, our Holy Mother, the hierarchical Church.

2. To praise sacramental confession and the reception of the Most Holy Sacrament once a year, and much better once a month, and better still every week.

3. To praise the frequent hearing of Mass.

4. To praise highly the religious life, virginity, and continence; and also marriage, but not as highly.

5. To praise the vows of religion, obedience, poverty, chastity, and other works of perfection and supererogation.

6. To praise the relics of the saints... [and] the stations, pilgrimages, indulgences, jubilees, Crusade indulgences, and the lighting of candles in the churches.

7. To praise the precepts concerning fasts and abstinences... and acts of penance.

8. To praise the adornments and buildings of churches as well as sacred images.

9. To praise all the precepts of the church.

10. To approve and praise the directions and recommendations of our superiors as well as their personal behaviour.

11. To praise both the positive and scholastic theology.

12. We must be on our guard against making comparisons between the living and those who have already gone to their reward, for it is no small error to say, for example: 'This man knows more than St. Augustine'; 'He is another Saint Francis, or even greater'.

13. If we wish to be sure that we are right in all things, we should always be ready to accept this principle: I will believe that the white that I see is black, if the hierarchical Church so defines it. For I believe that between... Christ our Lord and... His Church, there is but one spirit, which governs and directs us for the salvation of our souls.


The Jesuits State the Principle of Obedience

As leaders of the Counterreformation the Jesuits attempted to live by and to instill in Catholics the strictest self-discipline and obedience. Here is a statement from the Constitutions of the Order by which the Jesuits were governed.

Let us with the utmost pains strain every nerve of our strength to exhibit this virtue of obedience, firstly to the Highest Pontiff, then to the Superiors of the Society, so that in all things, to which obedience can be extended with charity, we may be most ready to obey his voice, just as if it issued from Christ our Lord... directing to this goal all our strength and intention in the Lord, that holy obedience may be made perfect in us in every respect, in performance, in will, in intellect; by submitting to whatever may be enjoined on us with great readiness, with spiritual joy and perseverance; by persuading ourselves that all things [commanded] are just; by rejecting with a kind of blind obedience all opposing opinion or judgment of our own; and [let us do so] in all things which are ordained by the Superior where it cannot be clearly held that any kind of sin intervenes. And let each one persuade himself that they that live under obedience ought to allow themselves to be borne and ruled by divine providence working through their Superiors exactly as if they were a corpse which suffers itself to be borne and handled in any way whatsoever; or just as an old man's stick which serves him who holds it in his hand wherever and for whatever purpose he may wish to use it...