The First Jesuits’ Vow of Obedience (1539)

Subsequent to their initial deliberations during Lent in 1539, the eleven men determined their religious order would include a vow of obedience. They offered their shared intentions to enter that organization by signing the following vow of obedience, if, the vow notes, the group “will be confirmed by the pope.” Papal approval for the Society of Jesus came fourteen months later.

[Ihs]

I, N., the undersigned, confess in the presence of Almighty God, of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary, and of the whole court of heaven that, after having commended the matter to God in prayer and having duly reflected upon it, I have of my own will and judgment deemed it more expedient to God’s praise and to the permanence of the Society that there should be a vow of obedience in it; and I have deliberately offered myself, but without a vow or any obligation, to enter the same Society if, with the Lord’s approval, it will be confirmed by the pope; and, in memory of this resolve (which I recognize as a gift of God), I now, although most unworthy, advance with this same resolve to receive Holy Communion.

Tuesday, April 15, 1539.

CAÇES\(^1\) – JOHANNES CODURI\(^2\) – LAYNEZ\(^3\) – SALMERON\(^4\) – BOBADILLA\(^5\) – PASCHASIUS BROET\(^6\) – PETRUS FABER\(^7\) – FRANCISCUS\(^8\) – IGNATIUS\(^9\) – SYMON RODORICI\(^10\) – CLAUDIUS IAIUS\(^12\)

\(^1\) Diego de Cáceres, a Spaniard, had been a friend of Ignatius in Paris and had decided to become one of his followers. He arrived in Rome at the beginning of 1539 and took part the deliberations of the companions. That same year he returned to Paris, where he continued his studies with other scholastics of the Society of Jesus, and was ordained a priest. In 1541, however, he left the Society and entered the services of Francis I, king of France.

\(^2\) Jean Codure was born in Seyne (Provence) in 1508 or 1509. He joined Ignatius and his companions in Paris in 1536 and died in Rome in 1541.

\(^3\) Diego Laínez was born in 1512 in Almazán. In 1533 he went to Paris, where he entered the university and became a companion of Ignatius. He was elected the second general of the Society of Jesus in 1558, and died in 1565.

1 [5] Nicolás Alonso de Bobadilla, who was born in Bobadilla del Camino (Palencia) in 1508 or 1509 and went to Paris in 1533, where he soon became one of Ignatius’s companions. He died in Loreto in 1590.

1 [6] Paschase Broët was born in Bertrancourt (Picardy) around 1500. He moved to Paris in 1534 and two years later was already one of Ignatius’s companions. He died there in 1562.

1 [7] Pierre Faver (Peter Faber) was born in Villaret (Savoy) in 1506. He went to Paris in 1534 and lived there in the same dwelling with Xavier and Ignatius, whom he joined in 1531. He died in Rome in 1546 and was beatified in 1872.


1 [9] Ignatius of Loyola.

1 [10] Simão Rodrigues de Azevedo was born in Vouzella (Beira Alta), in northern Portugal in 1510. He arrived in Paris in 1527 and joined Ignatius in 1532. The founder, and first provincial, of the Society in Portugal, he died in Lisbon in 1579.

1 [11] Claude Le Jay was born in Micussy (Upper Savory) between 1500 and 1504. He went to Paris in 1543 and joined Ignatius and his companions in 1535. He died in Vienna in 1552.

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