

Religious Freedom: Essential to Our Faith

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Religious Freedom – Outline

- Introduction – simple exercise
- What is Truth
- What is Freedom
- What is Religious Freedom
- Significance and Importance of Religious Freedom for our Faith

Religious Freedom – Opening Exercise

- Take some minutes of reflection and on the sheet provided answer to the best of your ability the following questions:
 - **Why did you come this evening?**
 - **What are your expectations?**
- **Conclusions**
 - Freedom and search for truth
 - Self-reflection
 - Freedom to act on the truth to achieve happiness

Truth – Four Categories (*Fides et ratio* 30)

- Practical Truth – common experience
 - Impact of the world on us
- Scientific – through experimentation
 - Immediate evidence or confirmed by experimentation
 - Correspondence theory of truth
- Philosophical – through reasoning
- Religious truths – through revelation

Truth – Key Aspects (numbers refer to *Fides et ratio*)

- Universal and absolute (27)
- Discovery of truth demands assent to it leading to ethics
 - Truth – adherence – moral obligation (25)
- Challenges to the search for truth (28)
 - limitation of reason
 - inconsistency of the heart
 - fear of the demands of truth
- Humans' partial knowledge of truth (31-32)
 - humans cannot discover all the dimensions of truth by themselves
 - Truth – Belief – Trust – Friendship

Freedom

- Second Vatican Council:
 - “Only in freedom can man direct himself toward goodness. . . . authentic freedom is an exceptional sign of the divine image within man. For God has willed that man remain ‘under the control of his own decisions,’ so that he can seek his Creator spontaneously, and come freely to utter and blissful perfection through loyalty to Him”
 - “Hence man's dignity demands that he act according to a knowing and free choice that is personally motivated and prompted from within, not under blind internal impulse nor by mere external pressure.” (GS 17)

Freedom (following Karl Rahner)

- Two distinct elements
 - Choice
 - Doing something or nothing; doing A or B
 - Deliberate action
 - Concrete decision
 - Self-determination
 - Deciding about myself
 - Choosing what to make of myself
 - Determining myself in concrete actions
 - Constituting myself – my subjectivity
- Rooted in reason and will
- Initiate and control one's action

Freedom (following Karl Rahner)

- Source of growth and maturity
- Aims at permanence and not reversibility
- Limited and fallible
 - Humans cannot realize themselves completely
 - Factors affecting freedom and consequently diminishing culpability
 - Ignorance, thoughtlessness, duress, fear, habit, inordinate attachments, psychological or social factors
 - Economic, social, political and cultural conditions
- When deciding for values and for realizing them, humans become the source of values

Conclusions – Truth and Freedom

- Humans search for truth
 - meaning of their life and their universe
- Religious Freedom is a right that originates from the dignity of the human person
 - Constitutional recognition

Religious Freedom (following Human Dignity)

- Definition
 - To act and behave in conformity with your beliefs
- Two levels
 - Individual
 - Collective – a group or a church
- Four limits to Religious Freedom (2)
 - Just public order
 - Respect for the rights of others
 - Common good
 - Justice and civility

Religious Freedom (following Human Dignity)

- Rights of Religious Communities (4)
 - Self-governance
 - Public worship
 - Assistance
 - Education and instruction
 - Selecting, training, appointing and transferring of their own ministers
 - Communicating with local and international communities
 - Buildings, properties and funds
 - Educational, cultural, charitable, and social organizations
 - No hindrance from government

Religious Freedom (following Human Dignity)

- Family Life (5)
 - Determination of religion
 - Religious education of their children
 - Choice of schools
 - Governments to respect parents' decisions

Religious Freedom (following Human Dignity)

- Issues that go against Religious Freedom
 - Coercion
 - Proselytizing that ignores the individual's freedom
 - indoctrination
 - “The Church strictly forbids forcing anyone to embrace the Faith, or alluring or enticing people by worrisome wiles. By the same token, she also strongly insists on this right, that no one be frightened away from the Faith by unjust vexations on the part of others.”(AG 2)

Religious Freedom (following Human Dignity)

- Significance and Importance
 - Act of faith
 - “"The obedience of faith" (Rom. 16:26; see 1:5; 2 Cor 10:5-6) "is to be given to God who reveals, **an obedience by which man commits his whole self freely to God, offering the full submission of intellect and will to God who reveals," (4) and freely assenting to the truth revealed by Him.**" (DV 5)
 - Freedom to express, live, communicate, share, and celebrate the faith
 - See rights of religious communities and those of families
 - Follow Jesus' example (HD 11)
 - Invitation to believe
 - Avoidance of subjugation
 - Conviction instead of coercion

Thank you!