



**FREEDOM OF THE CHILDREN OF GOD
IN THE TEACHINGS OF ST JOSEMARIA**



‘God created us without us: but he did not will to save us without us’.

St Augustine, Sermon 169¹

‘You have made us for Yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in You.’

St Augustine, Confessions²

‘Love *fulfils* freedom, it redeems it. Love enables freedom to discover its origin and goal in God’s Love.’

The Father, Letter, 9 January 2018, no. 4.

¹ Augustine, Sermon 169, 11, 13: PL 38, 923, quoted in CCC, no. 1847.

² *Lib 1,1-2,2.5,5: CSEL 33, 1-5*

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Introduction³

Man has always been in search of an adequate answer to the question, who are we? Why is it so hard to “know thyself”? Obviously we find it easy to answer that we are human beings, but *what is that?*

‘Know Thyself’

Despite the fact that more than half of all the books on all the sciences that are sold in bookstores today are written about some aspect of psychology, there is no science with less agreement, less certainty, and less confidence that we now *know* what we used to not-know. We seem to know ourselves *less* well as a result of all this modern self-scrutiny than we did before. The more we look, the less we see. It is just the opposite with the external world. We can now understand the mysteries of the origin of the universe, 13.7 billion years ago, or the forces that keep the galaxies spinning trillions of light-years away, better than we can understand ourselves. “Know thyself,” said Socrates, at the dawn of philosophy. But “know thyself” seems to be an unsolvable puzzle, a *koan*.⁴ We *cannot* know ourselves, yet we *must* know ourselves. ‘The motto *Know yourself* ‘was carved on the temple portal at Delphi, as testimony to a basic truth to be adopted as a minimal norm by those who seek to set themselves apart from the rest of creation as “human beings”, that is as those who “know themselves”. (F&R1)

Socrates’ took up this advice, marking an important change of emphasis in Greek philosophy. The first philosophers had been interested in the mysteries of the world in which man finds himself. They asked questions about the sun and the moon and the stars and about the stuff out of which everything is made. But with Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, the nature of man himself, rather than the physical universe, became the most important mystery for the study of the philosopher.

The philosophers of the Middle Ages, while not ignoring the world around them, also stressed the study of man above the problems of the physical world. And although there are sharp differences in the outlook of the ancient world and the world of the Middle Ages, there was substantial agreement on the all-important point, which the Greeks had been the first to justify on grounds of reason, that man is different from the rest of the animals in that he possesses the distinctive powers of reason and free will.

Through all the diversity and historical accidents of the past two and a half thousand years, this concept of the human being as responsible and rational has exerted a continuing and profound influence on the political and social

³ Sources: P. Kreeft, *The Philosophy of Jesus* (South Bend Indiana: St Augustine’s Press, 2007); D. J. Sullivan, *An Introduction to Philosophy* (Rochford, Illinois: TAN, 1992); S. Sullivan, *Classical Man & the Traditional Ethic: A Contemporary Defence*, at www.scottmsullivan.com.

⁴ *Koan*. A paradoxical anecdote or a riddle that has no solution; used in Zen Buddhism to show the inadequacy of logical reasoning.

thinking and institutions of the West. Yet, in our own times, probably no element in our cultural inheritance has been more called in question. And since the answer to this question affects us so profoundly even in practical, everyday affairs, we will study the problem of human beings and our destiny, with a particular focus on freedom.

The view of man changes

Probably the most widely held view of man today in opposition to the older, traditional view is that man is simply one more of the brute animals - a superior animal, to be sure, but still just an animal, with the same questionable and transitory value of any other animal. And just as animals in general are creatures of instinct, with no real control over their instinctive drives or over the pull on their senses from the outside, so too man is impelled purely by the attraction of sense goods and by the blind drive of instinct.

A still grosser view of man sees him as a kind of machine, a bundle of conditioned reflexes which respond as necessarily to the impersonal laws of mechanics and physics as the leaf falling from the tree. Manipulate the physical stimuli which act on man and you can control both the individual and society as surely as you can control machinery: given the proper stimulus, the reflex will be mechanic, automatic, and foreseeable.

Common to both these doctrines is the view that man is a freakish and haphazard, appearance in an ever-evolving universe, a chance collection of atoms, an insignificant dot destined to last but the flash of an instant in the vast perspective of time unending: a being without meaning, without destiny, without hope.

Ideas have consequences

Many philosophers and psychologists over the past two hundred years and more have taught this and similar doctrines about the nature of man. For a long time the consequences of this teaching were not too apparent, for the leavening process of ideas is a slow one. We have reached the point in our own day, however, when large parts of the world are controlled by men who apply literally the teachings that yesterday belonged to the lecture hall. As a result we see today the manipulation of whole populations as though they were herds of cattle; we have seen people used in slave labour camps and their worth calculated at what it costs to feed them; we see the human personality assaulted and shattered by the identical techniques used by the Russian scientist Pavlov in his experiments on the conditioned reflexes of brute animals. And no one can be sure that in some "Brave New World" of tomorrow he will not be the victim of inhuman state technicians.⁵ There are few questions, then, whose right answer is so important to us as this question, what is the nature of man?

⁵ The article was written in 1957. These words had a prophetic tone. This is an example of how philosophy can give deep answers to problems that go beyond the domain of certain sciences.

Man is different

Philosophers and scientists are right when they insist on the strength and importance of man's instincts and sense appetites, and when they assert that he is deeply immersed within the impersonal forces of the physical universe. For man is, of course, an animal, and as such a part of the physical universe. As a material being, he is obedient to the laws of physical nature. If he puts his hand in fire his hand will burn. If he goes out in the rain, he will get wet. If he doesn't breathe or eat he will die.

But to make this side of man the whole man is as erroneous as to say that a Rembrandt portrait is a mixture of colours on two square feet of canvas, or that a sonnet of Shakespeare consists of some splashes of ink on a small strip of paper. For just as something shines out of the picture or the sonnet which is more than a mere arrangement of physical elements, so too something shines out of man which is more than the sum total of any possible arrangement of the physical elements which go into the make-up of his body.

Besides being an animal, man has a power - the power of reason - which in itself makes him different in kind from the rest of the animals. Man can see the sameness in difference which runs through things, the oneness in many, the enduring reality behind outward change. He knows meaning and law and purpose and, through his power of free choice, he can choose between the various alternatives which are presented to him by his intellect. In short, man is a being altogether unique as compared with the rest of the physical universe, because in knowing and judging he rises above the inexorable law and rigidity of the realm of matter.

Many philosophers have been tempted to deny reason to man, thinking thereby to make it easier to explain him. Our university libraries are full of books which compare the activities of man with those of other animals such as guinea pigs and monkeys. The usual implication is that there is no real difference beyond a rising scale of complexity.

Since man is an animal with a body, sense powers, feelings, and emotions just as are the other animals, it would be very surprising if there were not many and deep correspondences between animal and human behaviour. But the really important fact, which many psychologists ignore, is that man has a whole range of activities for which there is no parallel in the rest of the animal kingdom - activities which are explainable as the product of reason and unexplainable otherwise. Not until the ape and the guinea pig also start performing these activities can the student of animal psychology legitimately assert that there is no difference between man and the rest of the animal kingdom.

Philosophical Anthropology Recap

In Philosophical Anthropology we introduced the study of human nature and examined it from various angles. Human beings have a spiritual soul, and, because of this, they are beings whose lives transcend matter. Human beings are persons, beings who possess radical and intrinsic dignity, and who, as we know by faith, have been called to communion with God. The human being is not only a rational animal but also made

in the image and likeness of God. A deep understanding of human nature and vocation is important for orienting us towards what will really fulfil us, and for avoiding errors about the human person present in today's culture.

Body and Soul

Human beings are not souls trapped in bodies; we are neither just the same as other animals, nor are we purely spiritual beings like angels. The body is not just a container operated by spiritual beings. The human being is a corporeo-spiritual being, a substantial *unity* of body and soul. This is reflected in the mind-body interaction and in a profound psychosomatic unity. The body and the soul *together* constitute the human person. The spiritual soul possesses capacities or faculties that are both sensitive (shared with other animals) and spiritual. All of them play a role in helping us to flourish as human beings and reach our end and perfection. A true understanding of virtue, of freedom, relationships, bioethics, the interior struggle, and of what is truly good for us, depends upon a good understanding of this relationship. The great philosopher and theologian St Thomas Aquinas constantly emphasised this point in response to dualistic heresies that unhelpfully and incorrectly denied the positive role of the body in human nature and in God's plan for human beings.

The good of anything depends on the condition of its nature. Now there is no sensitive appetite in God and the angels, as there is in man. Consequently good operation in God and the angels is altogether without passion, as it is without a body: whereas *the good operation of man is with passion, even as it is produced with the body's help.*

St Thomas Aquinas⁶

As a first step in studying how our corporeo-spiritual nature works, we looked at the human being from both a phenomenological and metaphysical perspective. From the phenomenological perspective, various aspects of human activity (love, language, work, art, morality, religion, etc) reveal the spiritual dynamism that characterises human beings, along with their physicality. The metaphysical study focused on the cognitive capacities of human beings and their tendential dynamism, that play a role in human acts.

⁶ St Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, (New York: Benzinger Brothers, 1911-1925), IIa-IIae, I-II, q.56, a.3 ad.3.

The following diagram presents an overview of these faculties or capacities.⁷

Rational Powers			Intellect
			Will
Animal Powers	Knowing	Internal	Unifying sense
			Estimation
			Memory
			Imagination
		External	Sight
			Hearing
			Smell
			Taste
	Appetitive	Irascible	Touch
			Hope
			Courage
			Fear
			Despair
		Anger	
Concupiscible	Love		
	Desire		
	Joy		
	Hate		
	Aversion		
Vegetative Powers			Sorrow
			Reproduction
			Growth
			Nutrition

⁷ Sullivan, *Introduction to Philosophy*, 112.

Knowledge

The human being has sense knowledge, as do non-human animals, and also the spiritual faculty, the intellect, by which human beings, while using sense knowledge, also essentially transcend it, allowing them to penetrate into the being and meaning of reality.

The Tential Dynamism

Where there is knowledge there is appetite, and we looked at the affective or tential dynamism: the appetite and its movements (passions, emotions, affects, sentiments). We examined the passions, which non-rational animals also possess, and how, thanks to the rational appetite (the will), human beings are free and able to educate the passions, integrating them into a virtuous life.

Freedom

Because they possess intellect and free will, human beings are able to know and love the good, and, as master of their own acts, direct themselves and their actions in a way that is essentially superior to that of animals. This is the basis of human freedom.

Sociability

Human beings are social by nature. As the philosopher Aristotle put it,

Man is by nature a social animal. An individual who is unsocial naturally and not accidentally is either beneath our notice or more than human. Society is something that precedes the individual. Anyone who either cannot lead the common life or is so self-sufficient as not to need to, and therefore does not partake of society, is either a beast or a god.⁸

The reason why man needs other men is because his human nature cannot fully develop without others. He needs others for his nourishment and growth when he is still a baby. He depends on others for his education and training. As an adult, his interaction with other people helps him develop socio-cultural traits that form his personality.

Society is essential to the fulfillment of the human vocation.⁹ The social doctrine of the Church enunciates fundamental principles required to protect the fundamental rights of the human person and the salvation of souls, and to promote the common good.¹⁰

The common good embraces the sum-total of all those conditions of social life which enable individuals, families, and organizations to achieve complete an effective fulfillment.¹¹

⁸ Aristotle, *Politics*, (1.2.1253a28-30).

⁹ CCC, 1886.

¹⁰ *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church (CSDC)*, 71.

¹¹ John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra*, encyclical letter, 1961, no. 74.

Individualism

Individualism focuses on the egoistic aspect of a person's actions. Egoism fosters self-interest above all, leading people to isolate themselves from others. Human beings then consider themselves to be self-sufficient and to not need others for anything. It creates the mentality of "each to their own".

Individualism establishes an exaggerated separation between private and public life. One's private life is the domain of personal beliefs, values, interests, in a word, one's intimacy. No one can meddle in this. One's public life, on the other hand, consists of one's relations with others. Beliefs and values have no place in public life because they would be impositions on other people's beliefs and values. It is the state's duty to regulate individuals so that their privacy is respected and so that each one contributes to the state the way they should.

The human person may never be thought of only as an absolute individual being, built up by himself and on himself, as if his characteristic traits depended on no one else but himself. Nor can the person be thought of as a mere cell of an organism that is inclined at most to grant it recognition in its functional role within the overall system. ...Individuals do not feel themselves isolated units, like grains of sand, but united by the very force of their nature and by their internal destiny, into an organic, harmonious mutual relationship.

Man cannot be understood "simply as an element, a molecule within the social organism". Affirming the primacy of the person is not about an individualistic or mass vision.¹²

Human existence and its limits in this life

We have seen that man is open to many possibilities throughout his earthly existence. Through his intellect and will, he can transcend himself and tend towards the fulfilment of his life project. However, since man is a finite creature, his earthly existence is fraught with imperfection. Metaphysically, this is explained by man's materiality, which gives him potency. In the same way that he can begin to exist, he can also cease to exist. Even in the course of his earthly life, his imperfect nature leads him to experience sickness, weakness, pain and suffering. Therefore, man is limited. However, all this has meaning. If it did not, then the life of man on earth is a useless existence.

The period of human life and its deep meaning

Man is immersed in space and time. His corporeity places him in this situation. He fulfils himself and realizes his life project within spatial-temporal coordinates. This is in fact what gives meaning to man's life. Meaning or purpose in life is not given by something external to man. This, of course, needs to be understood correctly. The final end or the ultimate good is not a choice. Man necessarily has to tend towards it. However, in tending towards it he makes choices regarding the means. As we have previously studied, the decisions man makes are what determine him in the fulfilment of his life project. This is precisely what gives meaning to life. Therefore, man gives

¹² CDSC, 125.

himself meaning in life. The decisions he makes which help him realize his ideals are what give meaning.

However, man also transcends time with his intellect. With his memory, he can relive the past and make it present. He can make the present moment last into the future by interiorizing his experiences. He can look toward the future and plan out the accomplishment of his goals.

The period of human life is not composed of isolated instants, but of a succession of moments that are linked with one another in a duration, making up the biography of a person. Furthermore, man's life follows a cyclical rhythm (day and night, rest and work, seriousness and playfulness, etc.). This rhythm is what gives variety to life and makes us aware of time, i.e. expectancy, hope, etc.

Faith and Reason

Faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth; and God has placed in the human heart a desire to know the truth - in a word, to know himself - so that, by knowing and loving God, men and women may also come to the fullness of truth about themselves.¹³ (*Fides et Ratio*, Introduction)

Men and women have at their disposal an array of resources for generating greater knowledge of truth so that their lives may be ever more human. Among these is *philosophy*, which is directly concerned with asking the question of life's meaning and sketching an answer to it. Philosophy emerges, then, as one of noblest of human tasks. ... The term philosophy means "love of wisdom". Born and nurtured when the human being first asked questions about the reason for things and their purpose, philosophy shows in different modes and forms that the desire for truth is part of human nature itself. It is an innate property of human reason to ask why things are as they are, even though the answers which gradually emerge are set within a horizon which reveals how the different human cultures are complementary (*FR*, 3).

The Church ... set[s] great value upon reason's drive to attain goals which render people's lives ever more worthy. She sees in philosophy *The Way* to come to know fundamental truths about human life. ... The Church considers philosophy an indispensable help for a deeper understanding of faith and for communicating the truth of the Gospel to those who do not yet know it. (*FR*, 5)

At the present time, the search for ultimate truth seems often to be neglected. Modern philosophy clearly has the great merit of focusing attention upon man. From this starting-point, human reason with its many questions has developed further its yearning to know more and to know it ever more deeply. Complex systems of thought have thus been built, yielding results in the different fields of knowledge and fostering the development of culture and history. Anthropology, logic, the natural sciences, history, linguistics and so forth - the whole universe of knowledge has been involved in one way or another. Yet the positive results achieved must not obscure the fact that reason, in its one-sided concern to investigate human subjectivity, seems to have

¹³ John Paul II, *Fides et ratio*, encyclical letter, September 14, 1998.

forgotten that men and women are always called to direct their steps towards a truth which transcends them. Sundered from that truth, individuals are at the mercy of caprice, and their state as person ends up being judged by pragmatic criteria based essentially upon experimental data, in the mistaken belief that technology must dominate all. It has happened therefore that reason, rather than voicing the human orientation towards truth, has wilted under the weight of so much knowledge and little by little has lost the capacity to lift its gaze to the heights, not daring to rise to the truth of being. Abandoning the investigation of being, modern philosophical research has concentrated instead upon human knowing. Rather than make use of the human capacity to know the truth, modern philosophy has preferred to accentuate the ways in which this capacity is limited and conditioned.

This has given rise to different forms of agnosticism and relativism which have led philosophical research to lose its way in the shifting sands of widespread scepticism. ... On this understanding, everything is reduced to opinion; and there is a sense of being adrift. While, on the one hand, philosophical thinking has succeeded in coming closer to the reality of human life and its forms of expression, it has also tended to pursue issues ... which ignore the radical question of the truth about personal existence, about being and about God. Hence we see ... attitudes of widespread distrust of the human being's great capacity for knowledge. ... People rest content with partial and provisional truths, no longer seeking to ask radical questions about the meaning and ultimate foundation of human, personal and social existence. In short, the hope that philosophy might be able to provide definitive answers to these questions has dwindled (*FR*, 5).

In the light of these considerations, the relationship between theology and philosophy is best construed as a circle. Theology's source and starting-point must always be the word of God revealed in history, while its final goal will be an understanding of that word which increases with each passing generation. Yet, since God's word is Truth (cf. *Jn 17:17*), the human search for truth—philosophy, pursued in keeping with its own rules—can only help to understand God's word better. It is not just a question of theological discourse using this or that concept or element of a philosophical construct; what matters most is that the believer's reason use its powers of reflection in the search for truth which moves from the word of God towards a better understanding of it. It is as if, moving between the twin poles of God's word and a better understanding of it, reason is offered guidance and is warned against paths which would lead it to stray from revealed Truth and to stray in the end from the truth pure and simple. Instead, reason is stirred to explore paths which of itself it would not even have suspected it could take. This circular relationship with the word of God leaves philosophy enriched, because reason discovers new and unsuspected horizons (*FR*, 73).

Faith

There exists a knowledge which is peculiar to faith, surpassing the knowledge proper to human reason, which nevertheless by its nature can discover the Creator. This knowledge expresses a truth based upon the very fact of God who reveals himself, a truth which is most certain, since God neither deceives nor wishes to deceive (*FR*, 8).

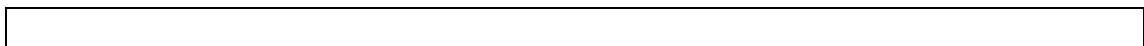
The knowledge which the Church offers to man has its origin not in any speculation of her own, however sublime, but in the word of God which she has received in faith. At the origin of our life of faith there is an encounter, unique in kind, which discloses a mystery hidden for long ages but which is now revealed: "In his goodness and wisdom, God chose to reveal himself and to make known to us the hidden purpose of his will, by which, through Christ, the Word made flesh, man has access to the Father in the Holy Spirit and comes to share in the divine nature". This initiative is utterly gratuitous, moving from God to men and women in order to bring them to salvation. As the source of love, God desires to make himself known; and the knowledge which the human being has of God perfects all that the human mind can know of the meaning of life (*FR*, 7).

Besides those things which natural reason can attain, there are proposed for our belief mysteries hidden in God which, unless they are divinely revealed, cannot be known". Based upon God's testimony and enjoying the supernatural assistance of grace, faith is of an order other than philosophical knowledge which depends upon sense perception and experience and which advances by the light of the intellect alone (*FR*, 9).

Philosophy and the sciences function within the order of natural reason; while faith, enlightened and guided by the Spirit, recognizes in the message of salvation the "fullness of grace and truth" which God has willed to reveal (*FR*, 9).

Through this Revelation, men and women are offered the ultimate truth about their own life and about the goal of history. ... "Only in the mystery of the Incarnate Word does the mystery of man take on light". Seen in any other terms, the mystery of personal existence remains an insoluble riddle. Where might the human being seek the answer to dramatic questions such as pain, the suffering of the innocent and death, if not in the light streaming from the mystery of Christ's Passion, Death and Resurrection? (*FR*, 10).

Though faith is above reason, there can never be any real discrepancy between faith and reason. Since the same God who reveals mysteries and infuses faith has bestowed the light of reason on the human mind, God cannot deny himself, nor can truth ever contradict truth. Consequently, methodical research in all branches of knowledge, provided it is carried out in a truly scientific manner and does not override moral laws, can never conflict with the faith, because the things of the world and the things of faith derive from the same God. the humble and persevering investigator of the secrets of nature is being led, as it were, by the hand of God in spite of himself, for it is God, the conservator of all things, who made them what they are (*CCC*, 159).



The Difference between Philosophy, Science, and Theology

The Scientist – uses complex experimental facts, specialized experience with elaborate technological equipment, making exact measurements and presenting the data quantitatively.

The Theologian – operates on a set of facts taken on belief or faith. For example, the theologian begins with the presupposition that the Bible is the word of God. If someone doesn't accept that, then they cannot begin to do theology proper. However, this doesn't mean that faith is without any rational foundation. Faith need not be blind. A special branch of theology, called fundamental theology or apologetics, will use reason to argue that it is rational and reasonable to take this certain set of facts based on faith. Reason lays the foundation for faith to then take over.

The Philosopher – begins with simple primary facts, commonly observable, which require no technology to discover. Of these facts, the philosopher can be absolutely certain and he need not worry about the precision of instrumental measurements. The conclusions come from common sense, general facts which are directly observable in the behaviour of mankind: people live and die, think and feel, digest food, see and hear, talk about love, music, history, and religion. St. Thomas Aquinas commonly refers to two primary facts that are easily observed: this man knows, this man dies. We do not need a laboratory to know that people have knowledge and that people die. These facts are incontestably evident; they need no further verification and are universally admitted. The philosopher's facts DO NOT CHANGE because his data does not change. We are not forced to revise our philosophical conclusions every time a new article pops up in some scientific journal. This is not to say that science is irrelevant to philosopher, on the contrary the philosopher at times may certainly consider the special experience of the scientist in the same way the scientist presupposes certain philosophical positions and relies on his common experience too.

NOTE: a view known as scientism, holds that "only science can give us true knowledge about the world", is a) itself not a scientific statement but a philosophical position and b) is self-refuting. There is no possible way that statement can be scientifically proven, and so undermines its own claim. Such a position is not only bad science, it is also bad logic. To say "science proves there is no human nature" is nonsense, science doesn't study natures. Moreover, any assertion such as "human beings are only material" is not a scientific position either, but a philosophical one. Science doesn't have anything to say about the existence or non-existence of immaterial reality, it studies only the material. To say things of this sort is to go beyond the realm of science and adopt a philosophical position of materialism.

In the next chapter we will consider freedom from the point of view of philosophy.

SUPPLEMENTARY READING

- Martin Luther King, 'I Have a Dream', in Ferdie Addis, *I Have a Dream: The Speeches that Changed History*, (London: Michael O'Mara, 2016).
- Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution, '*Gaudium et Spes*': On the Church in the Modern World, 7.12.1965, nos. 12-22.

The Second Vatican Council aimed to respond to the questions of people today. In the document *Gaudium et Spes*, nos. 12-22, the Church's Magisterium presents an overview of the 'whole truth about man' from the point of view of philosophical and theological anthropology, providing a background to this course. Some study questions are provided to assist you to work through the reading.

Chapter 1: What is Freedom?

The following text appears in response to a Google search 'what exactly is freedom?'

“Everybody loves freedom. Everybody wants it. At least, that is a common assumption. But a lot of questions need to be answered. For example: What is freedom exactly, and can it be accurately defined?

Is freedom the same as democracy?

Is freedom the right to do anything I want - regardless of the impact on anyone else?

Should I have the freedom to:

- * Enter your house and steal your money?
- * Smoke marijuana or inject heroin?
- * Drive at 150 km per hour?
- * Say anything I like?
- * Kill someone, if they ask me to?

These are troubling moral questions. All the more so, because they deal with highly contentious issues.

Is there any received moral code that can answer such questions unambiguously?”¹⁴

Defining freedom

It is not easy to define freedom. Among the oldest philosophical attempts to do so there is Aristotle's phrase: “man is free when he is cause of himself”.¹⁵ The formula contains real insights into the nature of freedom, but can also be misleading.

Part of the difficulty of defining freedom lies in the fact that freedom is such a broad term; it has to do with not being confined or oppressed; with political and civil liberty; with freedom of opinion and worship, of expression, etc.

Freedom is the power to act or not to act, and so to perform deliberate acts of one's own. Freedom attains perfection in its acts when directed toward God, the sovereign Good.¹⁶

In the present chapter we are going to study some fundamental ideas related to freedom.

¹⁴ What exactly is Freedom, David MacGregor at <http://strike-the-root.com/4/macgregor/macgregor1.html> accessed 12.10.2019

¹⁵ *Cause of oneself*, No one is an absolute cause of himself. No one causes himself to be, in a constitutive sense. Our life, our nature, our intellectual endowments, our temperament or artistic aptitudes, our free will, *are given to us*. They come with birth, they are not something we originate in ourselves. Nor, during infancy, can a child be said to be a subject of personal causality; he may be a physical cause of upsets or accidents, but is scarcely capable of actions that shape his life in any freely chosen way.

¹⁶ CCC, 1744.

We cannot adequately conceive or explain the nature of a human being without the notion of freedom. Freedom is one of most specific features of a person. We say that the person is *free* because he is the *owner of his acts*. He does what he wants to and does not do what he does not want to. He owns his interiority, something he alone knows and freely manifests to others. Because he has self-possession, he lives and perfects himself voluntarily, i.e., freely. Since he is master of his actions, he is also master of the development of his life and his destiny. He chooses both things. He who can act this way is a person; or better insofar as he is a person, he can act this way, i.e., freely.

Freedom: an inalienable right

There is a widespread tendency today to speak of freedom as something we simply have (or should have), without any apparent awareness that it is also and especially something we must *achieve and secure*, and consequently something we *can* lose. In fact, the self-inflicted loss of personal freedom is one of the most striking phenomena of modern times. When we describe freedom as an "inalienable right," we are asserting a philosophical principle or perhaps staking a claim. But neither the right nor the claim is likely to be safeguarded unless I realize that the greatest threat to my freedom lies inside; it comes from myself, for it is through my own actions I can end up most irremediably deprived of freedom.

Freedom is also a **subjective experience**; i.e. it is something that we experience in our lives and it could be present or absent at different stages and at different levels. In other words, at times we can make a decision feeling entirely free on that respect, but in some way limited on other aspects, for instance the girl who wants to marry a man but he is not approved by some members of the family. She may feel entirely free on her choice, however curtailed by someone different from her.

Freedom is not a goal in itself

The will as we have seen is a kind of corollary of reason. Knowing good leads us to desire it, however the actual choice of that good or any other belongs to freedom. We could say that the freedom of choice is the mechanism by means of which our freedom is realized.

Free choice is not an end in itself but rather is given to us in order that we may realize our full potentialities as human beings. We realise our freedom in making free choices that help us attain some purpose or end.

We all seek happiness but not everyone agrees where it should lie. Not everyone agrees, however, on what makes for truly human fulfilment. Some seek their fulfilment in wealth, some in power, some in sense pleasure, some in beauty, some in virtue, some in God. Some place their fulfilment, in short, in self-aggrandizement, others in self-giving: a false liberty may be set against true liberty.

Today we think of happiness as a temporary emotional state. For Aristotle, happiness was about a meaningful good life, *eudaimonia*. This involved thinking about what it meant to be human and about what was necessary in order to flourish in all the dimensions of our humanity.

This also included improving/developing our characters – character excellence—the life of virtue – cultivating good habits that would help us to discern what things were truly worthwhile in life, and help us achieve them.

So freedom is not a goal in itself.

Freedom, Happiness and Meaning

We all want to live happily; in the whole human race there is no one who does not assent to this proposition, even before it is fully articulated. (St. Augustine)¹⁷

What Exactly Is “Happiness”? We all want it. We all crave it. We all strive for it. Even the Dalai Lama has said: “The very purpose of life is to seek happiness.” But what exactly is it?

The word “happiness” has two very different meanings. The common meaning of the word is “feeling good.” In other words, feeling a sense of pleasure, gladness, or gratification. We all enjoy these feelings, so it’s no surprise that we chase them. However, like all human emotions, feelings of happiness don’t last. No matter how hard we try to hold on to them, they slip away every time. And as we shall see, a life spent in pursuit of those good feelings is, in the long term, deeply unsatisfying. In fact, the harder we chase after pleasurable feelings, the more we are likely to suffer from anxiety and depression.

The other far-less-common meaning of happiness is “living a rich, full, and meaningful life.” When we take action on the things that truly matter deep in our hearts, move in directions that we consider valuable and worthy, clarify what we stand for in life and act accordingly, then our lives become rich and full and meaningful, and we experience a powerful sense of vitality. This is not some fleeting feeling — it is a profound sense of a life well lived. And although such a life will undoubtedly give us many pleasurable feelings, it will also give us uncomfortable ones, such as sadness, fear, and anger. This is only to be expected. If we live a full life, we will feel the full range of human emotions.¹⁸

Furthermore, only if man uses his freedom of choice rightly will he enjoy true liberty - the freedom of self-realization, the freedom of autonomy or self-rule, as the Greeks called it. True freedom is found only in the man who has mastered himself, so that neither the constraint of instinct from within nor the pressure of force from without can make him deviate from the line of his conscience; it is the freedom of the man who has freed himself from the chains of ignorance and vice.

¹⁷ St. Augustine, *De moribus eccl.* 1, 3, 4: PL 32, 1312.

¹⁸ R. Harris, *The Happiness Trap*, (London: Constance & Robinson, 2008), 5.

The psychiatrist Viktor Frankl who survived the Nazi concentration camps, had the following to say about the quest for happiness:

Again and again, one is commanded and ordered to 'be happy.' But happiness cannot be pursued; it must ensue. One must have a reason to 'be happy.' Once the reason is found, however, one becomes happy automatically. As we see, a human being is not one in pursuit of happiness but rather in search of a reason to become happy, last but not least, through actualizing the potential meaning inherent and dormant in a given situation."

"Man is originally characterized by his "search for meaning" rather than his "search for himself." The more he *Forgets* himself—giving himself to a cause or another person—the more human he is. And the more he is immersed and absorbed in something or someone other than himself the more he really becomes himself."

Being human always points, and is directed, to something or someone, other than oneself--be it a meaning to fulfil or another human being to encounter. The more one *Forgets* himself--by giving himself to a cause to serve or another person to love--the more human he is and the more he actualizes himself. What is called self-actualization is not an attainable aim at all, for the simple reason that the more one would strive for it, the more he would miss it. In other words, self-actualization is possible only as a side-effect of self-transcendence."¹⁹

Freedom and Purpose.

When we know what we want we can decide what to do.

God willed that man should be left in the hand of his own counsel (cf. Sir 15:14), so that he might of his own accord seek his creator and freely attain his full and blessed perfection by cleaving to him. (CCC, 1743).

¹⁹ V. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning* (London: Rider, 2004), 162.

And he continues, "Life is never made unbearable by circumstances, but only by lack of meaning and purpose." Ever more people today have the means to live, but no meaning to live for. "Happiness cannot be pursued; it must ensue." "Sunday neurosis, that kind of depression which afflicts people who become aware of the lack of content in their lives when the rush of the busy week is over and the void within themselves becomes manifest."

Relativism & Subjectivism

When the ancient Greeks travelled around the Mediterranean, they were shocked to find different codes of manners and morals among the people with whom they came into contact.²⁰ Burial practices, for instance, that would have been abominable to Athenians were praiseworthy in Carthage. The ability to lie and cheat well in business was praised in one place while it was seen as dishonourable in others; caring for the elderly was a social duty in one society, where another society rejected their elderly. The fact that different peoples held different ideas about right and wrong led the Greeks to examine the foundations of morals. The Sophists claimed that morals were human inventions subject to arbitrary change. Socrates argued that, while they might differ on the surface, moral laws were just as objective and unchanging as the laws of physics.²¹

In today's Western society, many people would agree with the Sophists. The view that right or wrong is determined solely by culture or by personal opinion. Morality has nothing to do with truth or knowledge; it is opinion, and no one's opinion is better or worse, or more or less correct, than anyone else's. When applied to individual beliefs this view is known as subjectivism or relativism; when applied on the basis of culture, it is known as cultural relativism. Moral laws can be explained away as social conventions, prejudices, or tools for the powerful or clever to subjugate the weak or the foolish. Morals are arbitrary and relative.

The question arises, then: in our search for happiness and meaning, are we guaranteed to achieve it simply by virtue of the fact that our acts are free? Is there anything, apart from our transient emotions or caprice, that we can use to help us make choices about what we want to do? Is it possible to have a rational reflection on whether there are ways to live that are more likely to help us achieve our ultimate goal? Relativism says no – anything you do will be right or good simply because you choose it. Philosophers like Socrates, Plato and Aristotle opted for the rational reflection on the question of happiness and whether there could be any objective assistance in the search for happiness.

When people disagree on what is right or wrong, how do we decide on the right answer?²² Over time various tests have been proposed: the amount of pleasure it will bring; the amount of money or power, how it will perfect the state, etc. The first test we can apply is to examine whether an action benefits or frustrates our human nature. Humans are multidimensional beings and our needs, if we are to thrive, are multidimensional. As corporeo-spiritual, rational, social beings, we have certain basic needs that must be fulfilled in order to flourish and live happy, meaningful lives.

Furthermore, while things like pleasure, riches or power are partial goods, and so are desirable, none of them really satisfy. Only the possession of God, who is all-good really fills us, so can consider an action to be right or wrong, good or evil, according to whether it takes us towards or away from our goal.

²⁰James Rachels, 'The Challenge of Cultural Relativism', in Steven Cahn and Peter Markie (eds.), *Ethics: History, Theory and Contemporary Issues*, (Oxford: OUP, 2006), 651-58.

²¹ Sullivan, *Introduction to Philosophy*, 137.

²² The first principle of the practical intellect is 'do good and avoid evil'.

To choose and act wisely, therefore, we need to be aware of our human nature and its relationship to reality. Because human nature is common to all human beings, we can identify the moral principles that relate to it as universal, as being the same for all human beings. We can still make mistakes; we can choose something that turns out to be bad, thinking it will be good. There are two guides in our nature that can help us choose wisely. The natural law can guide us according to what works well for all human beings due to their human nature; conscience guides us in applying our ideas of right and wrong to specific choices.

The Natural Law

The term 'law' is commonly understood today as something opposed to, or limiting, freedom. The natural law does not oppose our freedom, but can be considered as wisdom that helps us in making choices consistent with, and leading to, our goal of meaning and fulfillment. The natural law gives us information about ourselves and so can help us work out what will be good for us and what it is, deep down, that we want and need for fulfillment. It does not tell us everything about ourselves or determine our decisions; human nature is open, we can set our own goals, we are free; but it does highlight for us some fundamental objective truths about ourselves.

God cares for man not 'from without,' through the laws of physical nature or instinct, but 'from within,' through reason, which, by its natural knowledge of God's eternal law, is consequently able to show man the right direction to take in his free actions." It is not necessary to believe in God to discern the natural law, as it is inscribed in our nature.

A Christian will also recognise in the natural law, God's care and guidance. Natural moral law is the participation in the eternal law by the rational creature. It is called "natural" because it consists of the light of reason that each person has by nature. The natural law is "the eternal law, implanted in beings endowed with reason, and inclining them towards their right action and end."²³ It is, therefore, a divine law (divine-natural). It consists of the very light of reason that enables man to discern good from evil, and has the force of law as the voice and interpreter of the "higher reason" of the divine Lawgiver, in which our spirit participates and to which our freedom adheres.

The natural law "hinges upon the desire for God ... who is the source and judge of all that is good, as well as upon the sense that the other is one's equal" (CCC, 1955).

The natural law is *universal*. It encompasses every human person, of every epoch (CCC, 1956). "It is *immutable* and permanent throughout the variations of history; it subsists under the flux of ideas and customs and supports their progress. The rules that express it remain substantially valid" (CCC, 1958). It is *obligatory*, meaning that, for a human being to attain complete happiness and fulfillment in God involves freely doing good and avoiding evil. Thus we need to be able to distinguish good from evil, which happens above all thanks to the light of natural reason.

²³ John Paul II, *Veritatis Splendor*, encyclical letter, August 6, 1993, 44.

Doesn't God impose rules on us? What about the Ten Commandments?

We call this 'Divine Positive Law'. Positive law is law expressing clear rules that is made by an authority, for instance parliament, or, in this case, God Himself. The Ten Commandments express immediate conclusions of the natural moral law.

The precepts of the natural law can be known by all men and women through their reason. Nonetheless, in fact not all its precepts are perceived by everyone in an immediate and clear way (cf. CCC, 1960). Its effective knowledge can be conditioned by personal dispositions, by the social and cultural climate, by one's education and upbringing, etc. Since mankind's present situation is still subject to the effects of sin, grace and Revelation are necessary for moral truths to be known "by everyone with facility, with firm certainty and with no admixture of error."

Human beings are free not to act in accordance with the Ten Commandments or with the natural law, however if they are not acting in accord with the nature and the deepest truths about themselves, it is, ultimately, not going to make them happy.

The Church, through its Magisterium, is the authentic interpreter of the natural law (CCC, 2036). This mission is not restricted only to the faithful, but—by Christ's command: *euntes, docete omnes gentes* (Mt 28:19)— it encompasses all men and women. Hence the responsibility of all Catholics to teach the natural moral law, since by faith and with the assistance of the Magisterium they can know it easily and without error.

Conscience

Conscience, present at the heart of the person, 'enjoins us at the appropriate moment to do good and to avoid evil. It also judges particular choices, approving those that are good and denouncing those that are evil. It bears witness to the authority of truth in reference to the supreme Good to which the human person is drawn, and it welcomes the commandments'.²⁴

Conscience is a judgment of reason whereby the human person recognizes the moral quality of a concrete act that he is going to perform, is in the process of performing, or has already completed.²⁵

The teaching of the moral law does not restrict conscience but illuminates it and allows it to judge securely and quickly.

Conscience specifies our "moral obligation in the light of the natural law: it is the obligation to do what the individual, through the workings of his conscience, knows to be a good he is called to do here and now."²⁶ Conscience is "the proximate norm of personal morality."²⁷ Therefore a person who acts against it commits a moral evil. This function of proximate norm pertains to conscience not because it is the highest norm,

²⁴ CCC, 1777.

²⁵ CCC, 1778.

²⁶ *Veritatis Splendor*, 59.

²⁷ *Veritatis Splendor*, 60.

but because it has for the person an ultimate and inescapable nature²⁸: “The judgment of conscience states ‘in an ultimate way’ whether a certain particular kind of behaviour is in conformity with the law”.²⁹ When a person judges with certainty, after having evaluated the problem using all the means at one’s disposal, no ulterior appeal exists - a “conscience of conscience,” a “judgment of judgment,” - because otherwise the process would go on to infinity.

A right or true conscience refers to a conscience that judges truthfully regarding the moral quality of an act. An erroneous conscience fails to reach the truth, viewing as good an action that in reality is bad, or vice versa. The cause of an erroneous conscience is ignorance, which can be invincible (and blameless) if it dominates a person to such an extent that there is no possibility of recognizing it and amending it; this ignorance may also be vincible (or culpable) if a person can recognize and overcome it but fails to do so because he or she does not want to use the means available.³⁰ A culpably erroneous conscience does not excuse from sin, and can actually aggravate it. Conscience is certain, when it expresses a judgment with the moral certainty of not being mistaken. It is probable when it judges with the conviction that there is some probability of error, but less than the probability of being correct. It is called doubtful when the probability of being mistaken is considered to be equal to or greater than that of being correct. Finally, it is called perplexed when one does not dare to judge because one thinks that both doing an act or omitting it is a sin. In practice one should only follow a certain and true conscience or a certain invincibly erroneous conscience.³¹ One should not act with a doubtful conscience, but rather first seek to resolve the doubt through prayer, study, asking for advice, etc.

Man has the right to act in conscience and in freedom so as personally to make moral decisions. "He must not be forced to act contrary to his conscience. Nor must he be prevented from acting according to his conscience, especially in religious matters."³²

Forming one’s conscience

Actions that are morally negative and done with invincible ignorance harm the person who commits them as well as possibly also others. Moreover, they can contribute to a greater darkening of conscience in society as a whole. Hence the urgent need to form one’s conscience correctly.³³ To form a right conscience requires instructing the intellect in the knowledge of the truth (for which a Catholic relies on the help of the Church’s Magisterium), and educating the will and the emotions through the practice of the virtues.³⁴ This is an effort that lasts one’s entire life.³⁵ In order to form one’s

²⁸ *Veritatis splendor*, 60.

²⁹ *Veritatis splendor*, 59.

³⁰ *Veritatis splendor*, 62; *Gaudium et spes*, 16.

³¹ A certain invincibly erroneous conscience is not a moral rule in an absolute way: it obliges only while it remains in error. And it does so not on account of what it is in itself: the obligatory force of conscience derives from the truth, and therefore an erroneous conscience can oblige only to the extent that subjectively and invincibly it is considered truthful. In very important matters (deliberate homicide, etc.) it is difficult to have an erroneous conscience that is inculpable.

³² CCC, no. 1782.

³³ Cf. CCC, no. 1738.

³⁴ *Veritatis Splendor*, no. 64.

³⁵ CCC, 1784.

conscience correctly, humility is especially important, attained by being sincere with God, and in spiritual direction.³⁶

Freedom in relation to God

Some people think they are free if they can avoid God; they fail to see that they remain existentially orphaned, helpless, homeless. They cease being pilgrims and become drifters, flitting around themselves and never getting anywhere.³⁷

“The truth is, of course, that the curtness of the Ten Commandments is an evidence, not of the gloom and narrowness of a religion, but, on the contrary, of its liberality and humanity. It is shorter to state the things forbidden than the things permitted: precisely because most things are permitted, and only a few things are forbidden.” (G. K. Chesterton, *Illustrated London News*, Jan. 3, 1920).³⁸

Freedom in its deepest meaning has a Theo-centric character, as distinct from the anthropocentrism which different modern philosophies have proposed in more or less recent times. Another idea related to this last characteristic is the fact that with our freedom we “save” ourselves, with the help of grace obviously; God will not take us to heaven against our own desire. We will explore this further in Chapter 2.

The limitless desire for happiness and fulfillment experienced in the human heart can only be satisfied by God Himself. We come from God and, by supernatural vocation, are made for communion with the three Persons of the Blessed Trinity. Nothing less will ever truly satisfy us. So each of us has, as it were, an inbuilt pathfinder, and we seek God, whether we realise it or not. St Augustine captures this beautifully in his *Confessions*: ‘You have made us for Yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in You’.³⁹

How is it, then, that I seek you, Lord? Since in seeking you, my God, I seek a happy life, let me seek you so that my soul may live, for my body draws life from my soul and my soul draws life from you.⁴⁰

And St Thomas Aquinas, ‘God alone satisfies’.⁴¹

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says of the natural desire for human happiness:

³⁶ “Spiritual guidance should not be used to turn people into beings with no judgment of their own, who limit themselves to carrying out mechanically what others tell them. On the contrary, it should tend to develop men with their own Christian standards. This requires maturity, firm convictions, sufficient doctrinal knowledge, a refined spirit and an educated will.” Saint Josemaría, *Conversations*, 93.

³⁷ Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, apostolic exhortation, 170.

³⁸ G. K. Chesterton, “Negative and Positive Morality”, 3 January 1920, in Lawrence Clipper, *G. K. Chesterton, Collected Works*, Vol XXXII, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989), 18.

³⁹ St. Augustine, *Lib 1*, 1-2, 2.5, 5: CSEL 33, 1-5.

⁴⁰ St. Augustine, *Conf.* 10, 20: PL 32, 791.

⁴¹ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Expos. in symb. apost.* I.

This desire is of divine origin: God has placed it in the human heart in order to draw man to the One who alone can fulfil it.⁴²

The Beatitudes reveal the goal of human existence, the ultimate end of human acts: God calls us to his own beatitude.⁴³

God gives us the gift of freedom so what we may freely love and know that we are loved.

God created man a rational being, conferring on him the dignity of a person who can initiate and control his own actions. "God willed that man should be 'left in the hand of his own counsel,' so that he might of his own accord seek his Creator and freely attain his full and blessed perfection by cleaving to him."⁴⁴

⁴² CCC, no. 1718

⁴³ CCC, no. 1719

⁴⁴ CCC, no. 1730

Catechism of the Catholic Church

THE DIGNITY OF THE HUMAN PERSON

1700 The dignity of the human person is rooted in his creation in the image and likeness of God ... it is fulfilled in his vocation to divine beatitude... It is essential to a human being freely to direct himself to this fulfillment ... By his deliberate actions ... the human person does, or does not, conform to the good promised by God and attested by moral conscience ... Human beings make their own contribution to their interior growth; they make their whole sentient and spiritual lives into means of this growth ... With the help of grace they grow in virtue ..., avoid sin, and if they sin they entrust themselves as did the prodigal son to the mercy of our Father in heaven ... In this way they attain to the perfection of charity.

MAN: THE IMAGE OF GOD

1701 "Christ . . . in the very revelation of the mystery of the Father and of his love, makes man fully manifest to himself and brings to light his exalted vocation." It is in Christ, "the image of the invisible God," that man has been created "in the image and likeness" of the Creator. It is in Christ, Redeemer and Saviour that the divine image, disfigured in man by the first sin has been restored to its original beauty and ennobled by the grace of God.

1702 The divine image is present in every man. It shines forth in the communion of persons, in the likeness of the union of the divine persons among themselves.

1703 Endowed with "a spiritual and immortal" soul, the human person is "the only creature on earth that God has willed for its own sake." From his conception, he is destined for eternal beatitude.

1704 The human person participates in the light and power of the divine Spirit. By his reason, he is capable of understanding the order of things established by the Creator. By free will, he is capable of directing himself toward his true good. He finds his perfection "in seeking and loving what is true and good."

1705 By virtue of his soul and his spiritual powers of intellect and will, man is endowed with freedom, an "outstanding manifestation of the divine image."

1706 By his reason, man recognizes the voice of God which urges him "to do what is good and avoid what is evil." Everyone is obliged to follow this law, which makes itself heard in conscience and is fulfilled in the love of God and of neighbour. Living a moral life bears witness to the dignity of the person.

1707 "Man, enticed by the Evil One, abused his freedom at the very beginning of history." He succumbed to temptation and did what was evil. He still desires the good, but his nature bears the wound of original sin. He is now inclined to evil and subject to error: Man is divided in himself. As a result, the whole life of men, both individual and social, shows itself to be a struggle, and a dramatic one, between good and evil, between light and darkness.

1708 By his Passion, Christ delivered us from Satan and from sin. He merited for us the new life in the Holy Spirit. His grace restores what sin had damaged in us.

1709 He who believes in Christ becomes a son of God. This filial adoption transforms him by giving him the ability to follow the example of Christ. It makes him capable of acting rightly and

doing good. In union with his Saviour, the disciple attains the perfection of charity which is holiness. Having matured in grace, the moral life blossoms into eternal life in the glory of heaven.

1710 "*Christ . . . makes man fully manifest to man himself and brings to light his exalted vocation*" (GS 22, no. 1).

1711 Endowed with a spiritual soul, with intellect and with free will, the human person is from his very conception ordered to God and destined for eternal beatitude. He pursues his perfection in "*seeking and loving what is true and good*" (GS, no. 15)

1712 In man, true freedom is an "*outstanding manifestation of the divine image*" (GS, no. 17).

1713 Man is obliged to follow the moral law, which urges him "*to do what is good and avoid what is evil*" (cf GS 16). This law makes itself heard in his conscience.

1714 Man, having been wounded in his nature by original sin, is subject to error and inclined to evil in exercising his freedom.

1715 He who believes in Christ has new life in the Holy Spirit. the moral life, increased and brought to maturity in grace, is to reach its fulfillment in the glory of heaven.

OUR VOCATION TO BEATITUDE

I. The Beatitudes

1716 The Beatitudes are at the heart of Jesus' preaching. They take up the promises made to the chosen people since Abraham. the Beatitudes fulfil the promises by ordering them no longer merely to the possession of a territory, but to the Kingdom of heaven:

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.

Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven.

1717 The Beatitudes depict the countenance of Jesus Christ and portray his charity. They express the vocation of the faithful associated with the glory of his Passion and Resurrection; they shed light on the actions and attitudes characteristic of the Christian life; they are the paradoxical promises that sustain hope in the midst of tribulations; they proclaim the blessings and rewards already secured, however dimly, for Christ's disciples; they have begun in the lives of the Virgin Mary and all the saints.

II. The Desire for Happiness

1718 The Beatitudes respond to the natural desire for happiness. This desire is of divine origin: God has placed it in the human heart in order to draw man to the One who alone can fulfil it:

We all want to live happily; in the whole human race there is no one who does not assent to this proposition, even before it is fully articulated.

How is it, then, that I seek you, Lord? Since in seeking you, my God, I seek a happy life, let me seek you so that my soul may live, for my body draws life from my soul and my soul draws life from you.

God alone satisfies.

1719 The Beatitudes reveal the goal of human existence, the ultimate end of human acts: God calls us to his own beatitude. This vocation is addressed to each individual personally, but also to the Church as a whole, the new people made up of those who have accepted the promise and live from it in faith.

III. Christian Beatitude

1720 The New Testament uses several expressions to characterize the beatitude to which God calls man:

- the coming of the Kingdom of God;
- the vision of God: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God"
- entering into the joy of the Lord;
- entering into God's rest:

There we shall rest and see, we shall see and love, we shall love and praise. Behold what will be at the end without end. For what other end do we have, if not to reach the kingdom which has no end?

1721 God put us in the world to know, to love, and to serve him, and so to come to paradise. Beatitude makes us "partakers of the divine nature" and of eternal life. With beatitude, man enters into the joy of Christ and into the joy of the Trinitarian life.

1722 Such beatitude surpasses the understanding and powers of man. It comes from an entirely free gift of God: whence it is called supernatural, as is the grace that disposes man to enter into the divine joy.

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

It is true, because of the greatness and inexpressible glory of God, that "man shall not see me and live," for the Father cannot be grasped. But because of God's love and goodness toward us, and because he can do all things, he goes so far as to grant those who love him the privilege of seeing him.... For "what is impossible for men is possible for God."

1723 The beatitude we are promised confronts us with decisive moral choices. It invites us to purify our hearts of bad instincts and to seek the love of God above all else. It teaches us that true happiness is not found in riches or well-being, in human fame or power, or in any human achievement - however beneficial it may be - such as science, technology, and art, or indeed in any creature, but in God alone, the source of every good and of all love:

All bow down before wealth. Wealth is that to which the multitude of men pay an instinctive homage. They measure happiness by wealth; and by wealth they measure respectability.... It is a homage resulting from a profound faith ... that with wealth he may do all things. Wealth is one idol of the day and notoriety is a second.... Notoriety, or the making of a noise in the world - it may be called "newspaper fame" - has come to be considered a great good in itself, and a ground of veneration.

1724 The Decalogue, the Sermon on the Mount, and the apostolic catechesis describe for us the paths that lead to the Kingdom of heaven. Sustained by the grace of the Holy Spirit, we tread them, step by step, by everyday acts. By the working of the Word of Christ, we slowly bear fruit in the Church to the glory of God.

1725 The Beatitudes take up and fulfil God's promises from Abraham on by ordering them to the Kingdom of heaven. They respond to the desire for happiness that God has placed in the human heart.

1726 The Beatitudes teach us the final end to which God calls us: the Kingdom, the vision of God, participation in the divine nature, eternal life, filiation, rest in God.

1727 The beatitude of eternal life is a gratuitous gift of God. It is supernatural, as is the grace that leads us there.

1728 The Beatitudes confront us with decisive choices concerning earthly goods; they purify our hearts in order to teach us to love God above all things.

1729 The beatitude of heaven sets the standards for discernment in the use of earthly goods in keeping with the law of God.

...

MORAL CONSCIENCE

1776 "Deep within his conscience man discovers a law which he has not laid upon himself but which he must obey. Its voice, ever calling him to love and to do what is good and to avoid evil, sounds in his heart at the right moment.... For man has in his heart a law inscribed by God.... His conscience is man's most secret core and his sanctuary. There he is alone with God whose voice echoes in his depths."

I. The Judgment of Conscience

1777 Moral conscience, present at the heart of the person, enjoins him at the appropriate moment to do good and to avoid evil. It also judges particular choices, approving those that are good and denouncing those that are evil. It bears witness to the authority of truth in reference to the supreme Good to which the human person is drawn, and it welcomes the commandments. When he listens to his conscience, the prudent man can hear God speaking.

1778 Conscience is a judgment of reason whereby the human person recognizes the moral quality of a concrete act that he is going to perform, is in the process of performing, or has already completed. In all he says and does, man is obliged to follow faithfully what he knows to be just and right. It is by the judgment of his conscience that man perceives and recognizes the prescriptions of the divine law:

Conscience is a law of the mind; yet [Christians] would not grant that it is nothing more; I mean that it was not a dictate, nor conveyed the notion of responsibility, of duty, of a threat and a promise.... [Conscience] is a messenger of him, who, both in nature and in grace, speaks to us behind a veil, and teaches and rules us by his representatives. Conscience is the aboriginal Vicar of Christ.

1779 It is important for every person to be sufficiently present to himself in order to hear and follow the voice of his conscience. This requirement of interiority is all the more necessary as life often distracts us from any reflection, self-examination or introspection:

Return to your conscience, question it.... Turn inward, brethren, and in everything you do, see God as your witness.

1780 The dignity of the human person implies and requires uprightness of moral conscience. Conscience includes the perception of the principles of morality (synderesis); their application in the given circumstances by practical discernment of reasons and goods; and finally judgment about concrete acts yet to be performed or already performed. The truth about the moral good, stated in the law of reason, is recognized practically and concretely by the prudent judgment of conscience. We call that man prudent who chooses in conformity with this judgment.

1781 Conscience enables one to assume responsibility for the acts performed. If man commits evil, the just judgment of conscience can remain within him as the witness to the universal truth of the good, at the same time as the evil of his particular choice. The verdict of the judgment of conscience remains a pledge of hope and mercy. In attesting to the fault committed, it calls to mind the forgiveness that must be asked, the good that must still be practiced, and the virtue that must be constantly cultivated with the grace of God:

We shall . . . reassure our hearts before him whenever our hearts condemn us; for God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything.

1782 Man has the right to act in conscience and in freedom so as personally to make moral decisions. "He must not be forced to act contrary to his conscience. Nor must he be prevented from acting according to his conscience, especially in religious matters."

II. The Formation of Conscience

1783 Conscience must be informed and moral judgment enlightened. A well-formed conscience is upright and truthful. It formulates its judgments according to reason, in conformity with the true good willed by the wisdom of the Creator. The education of conscience is indispensable for human beings who are subjected to negative influences and tempted by sin to prefer their own judgment and to reject authoritative teachings.

1784 The education of the conscience is a lifelong task. From the earliest years, it awakens the child to the knowledge and practice of the interior law recognized by conscience. Prudent education teaches virtue; it prevents or cures fear, selfishness and pride, resentment arising from guilt, and feelings of complacency, born of human weakness and faults. the education of the conscience guarantees freedom and engenders peace of heart.

1785 In the formation of conscience the Word of God is the light for our path, we must assimilate it in faith and prayer and put it into practice. We must also examine our conscience before the Lord's Cross. We are assisted by the gifts of the Holy Spirit, aided by the witness or advice of others and guided by the authoritative teaching of the Church.

III. To Choose in Accord with Conscience

1786 Faced with a moral choice, conscience can make either a right judgment in accordance with reason and the divine law or, on the contrary, an erroneous judgment that departs from them.

1787 Man is sometimes confronted by situations that make moral judgments less assured and decision difficult. But he must always seriously seek what is right and good and discern the will of God expressed in divine law.

1788 To this purpose, man strives to interpret the data of experience and the signs of the times assisted by the virtue of prudence, by the advice of competent people, and by the help of the Holy Spirit and his gifts.

1789 Some rules apply in every case:

- One may never do evil so that good may result from it;
- the Golden Rule: "Whatever you wish that men would do to you, do so to them."
- charity always proceeds by way of respect for one's neighbour and his conscience: "Thus sinning against your brethren and wounding their conscience . . . you sin against Christ." Therefore "it is right not to . . . do anything that makes your brother stumble."

IV. Erroneous Judgment

1790 A human being must always obey the certain judgment of his conscience. If he were deliberately to act against it, he would condemn himself. Yet it can happen that moral conscience remains in ignorance and makes erroneous judgments about acts to be performed or already committed.

1791 This ignorance can often be imputed to personal responsibility. This is the case when a man "takes little trouble to find out what is true and good, or when conscience is by degrees almost blinded through the habit of committing sin." In such cases, the person is culpable for the evil he commits.

1792 Ignorance of Christ and his Gospel, bad example given by others, enslavement to one's passions, assertion of a mistaken notion of autonomy of conscience, rejection of the Church's authority and her teaching, lack of conversion and of charity: these can be at the source of errors of judgment in moral conduct.

1793 If - on the contrary - the ignorance is invincible, or the moral subject is not responsible for his erroneous judgment, the evil committed by the person cannot be imputed to him. It remains no less an evil, a privation, a disorder. One must therefore work to correct the errors of moral conscience.

1794 A good and pure conscience is enlightened by true faith, for charity proceeds at the same time "from a pure heart and a good conscience and sincere faith."

The more a correct conscience prevails, the more do persons and groups turn aside from blind choice and try to be guided by objective standards of moral conduct.

1795 *"Conscience is man's most secret core, and his sanctuary. There he is alone with God whose voice echoes in his depths"* (GS, no. 16).

1796 Conscience is a judgment of reason by which the human person recognizes the moral quality of a concrete act.

1797 For the man who has committed evil, the verdict of his conscience remains a pledge of conversion and of hope.

1798 A well-formed conscience is upright and truthful. It formulates its judgments according to reason, in conformity with the true good willed by the wisdom of the Creator. Everyone must avail himself of the means to form his conscience.

1799 Faced with a moral choice, conscience can make either a right judgment in accordance with reason and the divine law or, on the contrary, an erroneous judgment that departs from them.

1800 A human being must always obey the certain judgment of his conscience.

1801 Conscience can remain in ignorance or make erroneous judgments. Such ignorance and errors are not always free of guilt.

1802 The Word of God is a light for our path. We must assimilate it in faith and prayer and put it into practice. This is how moral conscience is formed.

Are we really free? Freedom & determinism.

'We make decisions every day. What do I want for breakfast? What should I wear today? Should I go shopping before dinner or after? Is today the day to have that difficult conversation with a co-worker that I've been putting off?

The fact that we deliberate and think of ourselves as deciding what to do in many ways throughout the day demonstrates that we think of ourselves as having real options. We think of ourselves as having choices. We conceive of ourselves as being free.

A belief in free will is presupposed by all of traditional morality. We praise people for their good deeds and blame them for the bad that they do. But praise and blame make no sense unless people have real choices. Without freedom there can be no morality.

Attitudes of regret and pride also presuppose free will. A feeling of regret is tied to the belief that I could have acted differently. Likewise, a sense of pride wells up from the realisation that I could have settled for less, but didn't.

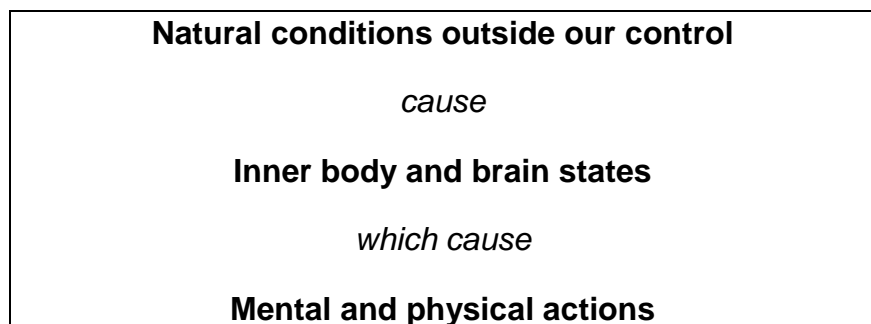
We all naturally believe that we are free. We naturally think that the future is open to our will, in large ways as well as in small things. And this is a crucial belief for most world-views⁴⁵

Today one of the dominant threats to the natural human belief in free will is Scientific Determinism.

Determinism

Determinism affirms that human beings do not have self-determination or free choice. Forces beyond our control, either outside or within, determine all human activity. We are determined in every way to do everything we ever do.⁴⁶ Freedom is an illusion. Determination can be either physical or psychological.

Broadly speaking, the argument looks like this⁴⁷:



Atheistic materialism, which denies anything spiritual, including the spiritual soul, is ultimately inconsistent with the notion of human freedom and results in determinism.

⁴⁵ Tom Morris, *Philosophy for Dummies*, (New York: Wiley, 1999), 125-6.

⁴⁶ Morris, *Philosophy for Dummies*, 134.

⁴⁷ Morris, *Philosophy for Dummies*, 134.

Some medical professional and philosopher deny that there is anything more to the human being than the physical. Mental states are brain states and freedom is an illusion. According to this approach, to understand the human brain is to understand the human person. Another version of determinism is behaviourism which sees environmental inputs as the cause of behavioural outputs. The more one knows about the environmental inputs, the more one can predict what a person will do. Thus science should be able to predict human behaviour as determined by the physical and environmental causes, whether as a particular action or as one of a range of evolutionary behaviours developed to respond to these stimuli.

Some thinkers are reluctant to acknowledge that determinism is incompatible with human freedom and the sense human beings have that they are free. While they are ultimately incompatible, a definition of freedom has been developed which takes into account the need for human beings to maintain the 'illusion' of freedom. This version of determinism is called 'soft determinism'.

Soft Determinism or Compatibilism

Soft determinists try to make our sense that we are free compatible with scientific causation. As determinists they hold that every event has a cause, but say that, if that cause is part of our inner state rather than influencing us from without, then our act should be considered free.

The problem is that here our actions are part of a causal chain, and we could not have acted differently. If we could only ever do what we in fact do, then this seems to exclude the notion of choice that is part of freedom. Soft determinists 'present us with a picture of freedom that allows our actions to be caused and constrained by natural laws and natural conditions outside our control and defined freedom in such a way that acting freely does not imply having been able to do otherwise. ... that being unable to do otherwise than as we do does not rob us of our freedom.'⁴⁸ This is not really freedom at all.

Libertarianism or Simple Indeterminism

At the other extreme, libertarians affirm that all our actions are free, totally unmotivated, uncaused behaviour. This view ignores habits, organic impulses, natural preferences, etc.⁴⁹

Moderate Indeterminism

In reality, freedom takes place within a ***moderate indeterminism***. In other words freedom can be found in between the extremes of determinism and libertarianism.

⁴⁸ Morris, *Philosophy for Dummies*, 140-1.

⁴⁹ No Scholastic ever held that there was an action without a cause. Also, the motive itself is the pre-existing necessary condition for free will. There is an abundance of causality in free choice.

Human beings are genuinely free, however there are also objective influences and limitations on our decisions and behaviour. Human beings are corporeo-spiritual beings. We have bodies and as such are affected by external factors such as the laws of physics and nature such as gravity, the need for nutrition, hydration and sleep.

But human beings, however, are not only physical bodies. The spiritual soul, with its spiritual faculties of the intellect and will, can be influenced by motives, but not always determined. Our actions can be caused from within.

The question is not whether exterior motives attract and influence, they certainly do, but whether motives necessitate a particular response. Heredity and environment are important – but moderate indeterminism still recognizes we can still determine to some extent what we do with our heredity and environment. Freedom of choice does not mean a lack of influences – it means those influences do not force me.⁵⁰

Limitations to Freedom

“You cannot grow a beard in a moment of passion.” (G.K. Chesterton, “How I Met the President”)⁵¹

Freedom in us **is not absolute**. Precisely because we are finite, corporeo-spiritual beings our freedom will have limits and boundaries. This doesn’t mean that it is defective or incomplete. It only corresponds to God to have absolute freedom. Here we are not referring to what is normally understood as libertine or unrestrained, and its derivations, which will be misunderstood notions of real freedom.

Although man is free to choose, he cannot free himself from the laws of the universe of which he is a part and cannot therefore escape the consequences of his choice. If someone chooses to jump out the window, he is free to do so, but he is not free to float in the atmosphere independent of the law of gravity. If a man chooses to make drunkenness his chief good in life he is free to do so, but he must accept the ravages to his health and fortune that such a choice entails.

Pope Francis notes some of the consequences of a belief of absolute freedom.

The natural environment has been gravely damaged by our irresponsible behaviour. The social environment has also suffered damage. Both are ultimately due to the same evil: the notion that there are no indisputable truths to guide our lives, and hence human freedom is limitless. We have forgotten that “man is not only a freedom which he creates for himself. Man does not create himself. He is spirit and will, but also nature”.... creation is harmed “where we ourselves have the final word, where everything is simply our property and we use it for ourselves alone. The misuse of creation begins

⁵⁰ See Psychological freedom, below.

⁵¹ G. K. Chesterton, “XIX How I Met the President”, in *The Collected Works of G. K. Chesterton* (Delphi Classics: 2014).

when we no longer recognize any higher instance than ourselves, when we see nothing else but ourselves".⁵²

But human freedom is not simply about not being forced from without. It is dynamic. We ourselves can choose to make things happen.

Freedom and Human Agency

We make things happen. We cause things. We set things in motion. From earliest infancy we are fascinated with our own ability to cause things in the world around us to change. ... We have power. We create our own activities. And we like doing it.⁵³

How you use your freedom determines what sort of life you live. ... It is only those who use their freedom best who live the life we are here to live to the fullest.⁵⁴

We initiate new causal chains for which we have responsibility. For example, a branch falls and damages your car. If the branch falls as the result of a lightning strike, then the lightning was the cause. But lightning has a cause, so we can go back further. If the branch fell because your neighbour sawed through it, then your neighbour is responsible in a unique way. Your neighbour's action initiated a new sequence of events that wouldn't have happened otherwise. The branch falling on your car has been caused by a free agent.⁵⁵

On this view of human freedom, our place in the universe is distinctive. We can, in fact, initiate wholly new chains of causal action. We can launch new things in to the world. We can change things and really make a difference, by our creative action. We are not puppets of fate, or of logic, or of science. We can choose our own destinies.⁵⁶

⁵² Francis, *Laudato Si*, encyclical letter, May 24 2015, 6.

⁵³ Morris, *Philosophy for Dummies*, 146.

⁵⁴ Morris, *Philosophy for Dummies*, 144.

⁵⁵ Morris, *Philosophy for Dummies*, 146.

⁵⁶ Morris, *Philosophy for Dummies*, 147.

Levels of freedom

A. Fundamental/Internal freedom

We who lived in concentration camps can remember the men who walked through the huts comforting others, giving away their last piece of bread. They may have been few in number, but they offer sufficient proof that everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms -- to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way. (Viktor Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*)⁵⁷

The most internal freedom is called *internal freedom, fundamental or transcendental freedom*. It is the deepest level of freedom. Because of this freedom, we say that a person "is" free. This is much more than saying "the acts of a person have the property of being free". A person's self-realization is connected with his being free.

Fundamental freedom can be defined as a self-possession in one's origin, a being master of one's self, of the expression of one's intimacy or inner life, and of one's actions. No external factor - torture, imprisonment, or brainwashing - can destroy this deepest level of freedom. It is not freedom from conditions, but it is freedom to take a stand toward the conditions. Our greatest freedom is the freedom to choose our attitude.

At this level of freedom, a person embraces his beliefs, desires or a love within one's self. This inner life, or intimacy, is inviolable because the person's *being is free*. We are saying therefore much more than affirming that a person "has" freedom. We are positing the following: We cannot remove fundamental freedom without annihilating the person himself.

Fundamental freedom enables a person to propose ends for himself. It is the freedom by which a person is said to be in his own hands (*causa sui*). It is the freedom that shapes a person's conduct freely. Fundamental freedom is therefore the restlessness of freedom to manifest itself externally, to take shape in self-perfecting actions.⁵⁸

B. Psychological freedom/ Freedom of Choice

St Augustine referred to this as *liberum arbitrium*.⁵⁹ Freedom of choice refers to the will's capacity to make two types of decisions:

Freedom of Exercise: a decision to **do** or **not do**.

Freedom of Specification: a decision to **do this** or **that**.

Determinism and libertarianism come into play again here in contemporary approaches to freedom.

⁵⁷ Viktor Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning* (Rider: London, 2004), p. 75.

⁵⁸ "I am the master of my fate, I am the captain of my soul." (William Henley, *Invictus*)

⁵⁹ Saint Augustine, *City of God (De civitate Dei)* 5.10, tr. Henry Bettenson (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1972), 195.

Determinism: freedom of choice is an illusion. Everything we choose is somehow determined or conditioned so our choices are not free. The social sciences (e.g. psychology and sociology), neurology, psychoanalysis, and Marxism have adopted this materialist explanation of a person. A philosophy of suspicion sees hidden motivations behind our choices. But, while “conditions” are a reality that cannot be denied, they cannot annul the free will altogether. The will remains free to accept or reject.

True freedom is found only in the man who has mastered himself, so that neither the constraint of instinct from within nor the pressure of force from without can make him deviate from the line of his conscience; it is the freedom of the man who has freed himself from the chains of ignorance and vice.

Libertarianism exaggerates freedom of choice. This popular view reduces freedom to freedom of choice. That is all there is to freedom, and it is what freedom is all about. In this context, John Stuart Mill holds that a person's way of living his life is the best way because it is the best way he thinks of living it. For Mill, freedom consists solely in aiming at "our own good in our own way" for as long as we do not harm others. What is important is not whether one's choice is good or bad but rather that it is freely made. By being freely made is meant not being constrained by rules or considerations coming from others.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ Being true to one's self is defined in this sense. If each individual is left to his own, nobody can ever tell anyone that s/he might be or is actually right or wrong. This is so because this second view states that one's very act of choice is the sole criterion for choosing a "good." In the end, it is tantamount to saying: "It is good because I chose it." This position has the following weak points:

First, the over-valuing of free choice silences other conditionings of choice, such as acceptance of the past. For Mill, freedom becomes indeed equivalent to the use of the will as power or dominion with respect to the future. In other words, choice with respect to the past (approval or rejection) and the exercise of choice in relation to passive synthesis is ignored.

Second, freedom is ultimately reduced to spontaneity. Now, spontaneity is understood to be that with which one is to perfect oneself simply because it comes from oneself. The weakness of this tenet comes from the fact that it is quite difficult to choose what is spontaneous in view of self-perfection since what is spontaneous is often times made up of unwilled desires and impulses. To opt to live spontaneously by way of unwilled desires is to allow life to *happen* to us but not *to live* it in a way that we are in control of our lives.

Third, the position exaggerates the importance of the very act of choice. It does not pay sufficient attention to the ends of an action. If the act of choice is the ultimate criterion, then no value or good would ever be better than any other. This outlook would easily lead to the absence of projects we could do together, a lack of solidarity or hyper-individualism. Mill's position finds no sense in social acts, such as giving advice or extending help.

Fourth, the line dividing what is tolerable and intolerable is blurred because to draw this line requires a criterion other than one's act of choice.

Fifth, the very act of choice becomes the supreme and only criterion. This leads one to ignore the objective value of anything in relation to person's self-perfection. That is to say, good and bad are mere external factors that really do not influence my freedom. If these factors are irrelevant I can never go wrong in my choice because I choose whatever I choose. If I were to take hard drugs as a personal choice, I am never wrong in doing so. Taking them would be a sign of being true myself even if it harms me.

Sixth, to equate spontaneity with goodness or with naturalness allows what is purely biological to lord over the person. Spontaneity does not guarantee that we choose well. We need other criteria so that our impulses conform to our projects in life, in line with specific goals. Our choices can be correct or not. We need to learn some values through education (through the family) and through a tradition, and then apply them to concrete situations prudently. Since our actions have consequences, we also need ethical criteria to judge them in the light of whether they impoverish or enrich us as persons.

The result of Mill's position embraced by so many advanced societies in Europe and North America are seen in the following phenomenon: individuals are egoistic, each minds his own business, encloses himself in his private world, and lacks solidarity. These are societies of lonely citizens. We will return to this in Chapter 4.

C. Moral freedom

Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom. (Viktor Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*)⁶¹

The third level of freedom is *moral freedom*, or increase of, or growth of freedom. This freedom refers to the realization of fundamental freedom over time.⁶² It has to do with the project of living one's life and shaping one's own biography and identity. It has to do with the person's life as a project and realizing his ideals through a lived life. This level of freedom is something that can be personally achieved or lost. It is a personal quality that has to be attained and yet may still be lost. It is expressed when a person says, "I want to be myself, "I want to fulfil myself."

Moral freedom is freedom that results from the good use of choice. Because man is perfectible and is a project to himself, he not only chooses what is within his reach to perfect himself but simultaneously acquires habits in the process. Good habits or virtues strengthen his capacity to develop himself amidst obstacles from within and from outside himself. In short, *moral freedom* consists in the exercise of virtues.

Hence, the exercise of moral freedom is directly proportional to the growth of freedom because the exercise of virtues capacitates the person to accomplish things he could not do before. Virtue expands human capacity. **Freedom increases with the good use of choice.** On the contrary, freedom decreases with the bad use of choice. What is specific to the person is to increase his freedom, to increase his capacity for virtue.⁶³ We will come back to this in Chapter 3.

The good man, although he is a slave, is free; but the bad man, even if he reigns, is a slave, and a slave not of just one

⁶¹ "Man does not simply exist but always decides what his existence will be, what he will become the next moment. By the same token, every human being has the freedom to change at any instant."

⁶² the capacity to affirm and love the good, which is the object of one's free will, without being enslaved by disordered passions or by sin

⁶³ What is usually referred to as an increase of freedom in Philosophical Anthropology corresponds to what psychology calls "maturity" and what ethics calls "moral perfection." Increase of freedom is expressed in being able to "realize" one's self, realize other possibilities, and realise others. Existentially, the increase of freedom is freedom viewed as a conquest, as a progress towards more freedom, as becoming freer. This means that a person decides how to realise himself as a matter of freedom (of exercise and of specification). That is to say, a person decides and directs his self-realization to something always concrete within a wide range of areas: personhood, profession, moral principles, religious beliefs, and aspirations. This can be synthesized in what is called criteria, values, and models. These are actually ideals that the person imagines himself to have, something he identifies with. We assume moral principles, beliefs, and a profession according to parameters within which we think we can unleash our "will of being". We consider the realm of our will of "not being" precisely outside of these parameters. In this realm, we can punish ourselves or, out of pride, we reject, despise, and detest ourselves.

man but, what is far more grievous, of as many masters as he has vices.

St Augustine, *The City of God*, IV, 3.

The criteria, values and models which a person identifies himself with are found in the existing socio-cultural systems that form part of our choices.

Freedom Not To Act

If it is true that freedom means the power to act, it must also involve the power *not* to act. To be free is to be able to say Yes or No. "I am free to do this." But-are you free *not* to do it? If not, you are not free. Freedom implies retaining one's self-dominion in the face of alternatives. If one can only say Yes, or only say No, one no longer has freedom. Oscar Wilde made himself the object of his own irony when he quipped: "I can resist anything-except temptation."⁶⁴ If that was really the case, then he was not free. But at least he realized it.

The most tremendous freedom man has is his power to commit suicide. Almost everyone at some time or other feels he would like to escape from life. Many people today commit suicide after a minor failure, in a situation of passing depression. No doubt that is a sign of their freedom, but it is a weak freedom unsustained by any solid system of values.

There is greater and stronger freedom in the person who, in moments of stress, resists the immediate impulses of feeling, etc., and assesses more deeply what is involved in taking one more chance at life rather than in ending it.

Fear of Commitment

I could never conceive or tolerate any Utopia which did not leave to me the liberty for which I chiefly care, the liberty to bind myself. (G. K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy*)⁶⁵

There is a rightful insistence today that freedom is a particular requirement of the dignity of the person. Yet many people fear that committing to something, or someone, is a loss of freedom, and so they avoid definitive decisions. Deciding not to make a decision is itself a free decision, (perhaps an impoverished freedom, even possibly on its way to becoming totally bankrupt), but by no stretch of the imagination can it be considered an affirmation of personal dignity. For a human being to be unwilling to commit to anything can signify a life

⁶⁴ Oscar Wilde, *Lady Windermere's Fan* (1893), Lord Darlington, Act I.

⁶⁵ G. K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy* (The Floating Press: 2008), 227.

lacking purpose or meaning, or, in the last analysis, a fear of freedom itself. The modern philosophy of rights forgets the right to commit or bind oneself:⁶⁶ therefore it tends to see freedom and commitment as opposed.

Freedom can be overtaken by a creeping paralysis, when a person yields to the fear of any choice, since choosing involves a new situation open to what is unknown. Paradoxically, the uncertainty that accompanies every decision can then turn freedom itself into a sort of prison where, as Michael Ende illustrates in one of his stories, all the doors of choice are examined one by one, and rejected; and the person remains where he was. Nevertheless, it is clear that to refuse to choose is in itself also a choice; and leaves one equally open to the future, with that fundamental character of the unknown which it never loses. There is no way of knowing what your future holds for you. You can try to shape it; you cannot control it.

The burden of the past oppresses many people. The fear of the future can have an even more negative and depressive effect. No philosophy is adequate for facing life if it is not a philosophy also "of the future," which in some way endows the future with positive sense for *me*. The failure of Marxism illustrates how to work for an abstract future "collectivity" is not a goal that can satisfy the individual. Each one wants to be able to face a future with a personal meaning.

One's life project is a result of concrete decisions and choices. In the final analysis, it is a consequence of one's use of freedom at different moments. It is also a consequence of our search for happiness -which we may or may not find-, of the discovery we make about certain truths of events that happen to us, etc. We experience this third level of freedom as *the development of fundamental freedom in time*. In other words, it *consists in living one's life, in writing one's own biography*. It is therefore not enough to depend on spontaneity because one's life project comes to shape by having goals towards which one directs one's self. These life goals are lofty, difficult but worthwhile because they expand a person's life view and enable him to stretch his capacities, stimulating him towards greater heights of self-perfection, towards, challenges, and even heroic deeds. The high goals a person proposes to himself are called *ideals*. An ideal is nothing else but a model of life that one chooses for one's self and which one decides to incarnate in actions. An ideal becomes a life project when a person decides to put it into practice seriously. Moral freedom is to realize one's own ideals.

D. Political freedom

⁶⁶ Cf. Chesterton's remark in *Orthodoxy*: "I could never conceive or tolerate any Utopia which did not leave to me the liberty for which I chiefly care, the liberty to bind myself." p. 227

The last and most external level of freedom is *political or social freedom*. It is in this level that we observe situations of misery and opportunities for persons.

Society must provide opportunities for persons to realize themselves freely. *Social freedom* therefore consists in allowing persons to achieve their ideals as they wish and allowing ideals to be lived. Any situation that connotes a lack of freedom that cannot be autonomously overcome by a person is a miserable situation. A *miserable situation* does not allow the person to grow. It reduces him to behave in a mechanical manner. *Misery* implies the inability to get out of poverty; it means to suffer what one does not will. *Liberation* is the process by which freedom is recovered, the process by which obstacles that tie the person down are removed.

Social freedom is liberation from the lack of economic, juridical, political, affective, etc. resources. We speak of liberation from poverty, ignorance, unemployment, political oppression, insecurity, sickness, or loneliness. *Misery* is the greatest form of absence of freedom because it implies the lack of goods that are necessary for the realization of human life in society. Society -dialogue, rational sharing, work, and family projects- in turn is the field where man can really invent what is human. This explains why the conquest of freedoms must go hand in hand with the process of liberating persons from miseries. In this light, liberation implies education. Liberation must provide the means for persons in society to have the possibility of directing their own lives. This means educating them to be self-sufficient. The greatest investment in development is to teach people to create wealth.⁶⁷

An *open society* is a society where freedom exists, both in theory and in practice. In such society, a person is the cause of his own success or failure. When this position is made radical, as is the case of highly competitive societies, persons can be unmerciful towards those who do not win. On the other hand, a *closed society* is a society that has decided everything and is therefore less free. In such society, a person cannot place himself where he wishes or cannot merit what he deserves.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Certainly, the total abolition of misery is a utopia because material limitation is something natural to our condition. Yet, liberation cannot be reduced to material liberation. Under normal circumstances, the process of liberation increases when opportunities are present. That is why any cry for freedom becomes pure rhetoric unless it is supported by real opportunities. *Opportunities are* situations that a person has to take advantage of at the time they arise because they may no longer be repeated. And since opportunities provide the person the chance to give the best of himself, taking advantage of them is crucial.

Exercising freedom

Free choice: mind, will and feelings⁶⁹

Where there is knowledge there is appetite.

Freedom finds **its roots both in the intellect and the will**. The intellect “discovers” and “studies” the good, the will “wants” it. Human beings have knowledge and corresponding tendential powers at two levels, the sensitive and the rational, reflecting our corporeo-spiritual nature. Below is a more detailed picture of the capacities, powers or faculties of the human soul relating to knowledge and the tendential dynamism (or appetites), that play a role in free human acts.

Rational Powers:	Intellectual Knowledge	+	Intellectual Appetite (Will)
Sense Powers:	Sense Knowledge	+	Sense Appetite (Passions)
			(<i>Concupiscible</i>) Love/Hate Desire/Aversion Joy/Sorrow (<i>Irascible</i>) Hope/Despair Daring/Fear Anger

As corporeo-spiritual beings, human beings obtain knowledge through the senses and the intellect. The human being is not just a knower, but also *acts upon* knowledge. Knowledge would not be very useful if we could not act upon it. As human beings, we do not merely desire to know, but we also act freely according to our knowledge.

The philosophical term for this tendency to move or act in response to something known is *appetite*, and the power that does the tending is the appetite. There are two types of appetites, the *sense appetite* (the life of the passions), which we share in common with animals who have, and respond to, *sense knowledge*; and the *intellectual appetite*, which we call the *will*.

The intellect seeks to know, while the appetites seek what is good or desirable in what is known. The appetites seek to attain an external object. Knowing is a static sort of activity, but desiring, on the other hand, motivates us to act and seek out the object which we desire.

Types of appetites: The Sense Appetite and the Intellectual Appetite

⁶⁹ Sources for this section include M. A. Cenzon, *Introduction to Philosophical Anthropology*, provisional draft; Sullivan, *An introduction to Philosophy*; Sullivan, *Classical man & the traditional Ethic: A Contemporary Defence*, at www.scottmsullivan.com.

Knowing can come about either through the senses or through the intellect; so too appetite can be stimulated by the senses or the intellect. The smell of freshly baked bread, for instance, may stimulate one's sensory organs, and the passion of desire may be aroused in response. The desire may be elicited automatically (we don't necessarily control how our sense appetites respond to external stimuli) – we may just find ourselves desiring bread. At the same time, one might remember that one is gluten-intolerant, and the will can respond to this knowledge and choose not to eat the bread to avoid becoming sick. Similarly, a mother who sees her house burning will naturally want to avoid getting burnt, but if she realises her children are inside, her intellectual appetite, or will, will respond to this knowledge by desiring to go into the burning house nonetheless.

Knowledge stimulates the appetitive powers. Common terms such as “incentive” “goal” “purpose” and “need” all refer to what the medieval philosophers called the final cause – that for the sake of which something is done. “Drives”, “urges”, “impulses” and things of this sort are appetitive responses to these goals and belong to the realm of what the medieval thinkers called efficient causality.

Our natural disposition or “affective state” refers to *The Way* in which a stimulus will affect us and includes emotions, moods, and temperament (a habitual emotional disposition). People with different temperaments will tend to act in different ways.

The Sense Appetite

The sense appetites seek what can be considered ‘good’ for us at a sense or bodily level, for instance pleasure, food, comfort, survival and the avoidance of hunger, discomfort, pain or danger. At this stage the intellect is not yet involved and the evaluation is not a moral one

The sensible appetites are divided into the concupiscible and irascible. The ‘concupiscible appetite’ is the simple desire for pleasure and the avoidance of pain. The ‘irascible appetite’ is the desire for goods that are difficult to obtain and so includes a willingness to endure danger and hardship in order to achieve it. The concupiscible appetite is the desire for pleasurable existence while the irascible is the desire to combat whatever threatens that existence. In the concupiscible it is a desire for pleasure’s sake, while in the irascible, it is the desire to fight and struggle for pleasure’s sake.⁷⁰

⁷⁰ Aquinas, *S. Th I*, q. 81, a. 2.

What Aquinas means by passions are what we would call today feelings and emotions. Aquinas and other medieval philosophers used passion (*passio*) not as it means today, some sort of carnal desire, but how animals undergo a passivity or reactive state in response to things outside the organism. Aquinas says the passions arise because of our love for what is good. Goodness arouses passions of attraction while the bad arouses passions of repulsion. Because of our natural love of the good, we naturally hate evil and want to avoid it, and depending upon the proximity of the good and evil, different passions will arise: “Now, in the movements of the appetitive faculty, good has, as it were, a force of attraction, while evil has a force of repulsion. In the first place, therefore, good causes, in the appetitive power, a certain inclination, aptitude or connaturalness in respect of good: and this belongs to the passion of “love”: the corresponding contrary of which is “hatred” in respect of evil. Secondly, if the good be not yet possessed, it causes in the appetite a movement towards the attainment of the good beloved: and this belongs to the passion of “desire” or “concupiscence”: and contrary to it, in respect of evil, is the passion of “aversion” or “dislike.” Thirdly, when the good is obtained, it causes the appetite to rest, as it

In non-rational animals there is an instinctual evaluation of a thing known, assessing its goodness or fitness for the animal's well-being, pleasure or survival. This is called the 'estimative power'. This evaluation sets off the causal chain of 'instinct'. The thing is automatically assessed for its goodness for the animal, passions like joy, desire, fear, or anger are elicited, and those passions command movement, for instance to come running for food, hide from the vet, or stalk prey.

As we will see below, the arousal of the passions in human beings is not always within our control and is a natural limit on our freedom. What is in our control is to decide what we will do with them, and how we will incorporate them into our free acts.

Free Choice: The Intellectual and the Will

Man is rational and therefore like God; he is created with free will and is master over his acts.⁷¹

Human beings have sense appetites. Where in animals the estimative assessment of the goodness of an object for the being is part of instinct which causes an animal's movements, in human beings the sense appetite is not the cause of human actions. Instead it works with the will.

The Will seeks goodness

The will is the intellectual appetite, the tendency that responds to an object known intellectually. The will is interested in the *goodness* of the thing known. The intellect knows a being as true, and knows what goodness is, and the will responds to the goodness perceived to be in the thing known. The assessment is not an instinctive one, but a rational one. It does not only take into account goodness from the point of view of pleasure and survival like the sense appetites, but takes into account the whole person. It does not only evaluate goodness as a relationship between the thing and self (a bone and the dog), but, as the intellect has the concept of goodness, it can perceive goodness in things, and compare between them. The will seeks a thing inasmuch as it is good, but as nothing is ever completely good in all ways, it is possible for the intellect to compare things and humans to exercise free choice.

The will acts upon the knowledge provided by the intellect. The intellect, after comparing, considering and judging, presents the will with a desirable object, eliciting the will's response. In other words, the intellect gives the will a goal which it naturally

were, in the good obtained: and this belongs to the passion of "delight" or "joy"; the contrary of which, in respect of evil, is "sorrow" or "sadness." On the other hand, in the irascible passions, the aptitude, or inclination to seek good, or to shun evil, is presupposed as arising from the concupiscible faculty, which regards good or evil absolutely. And in respect of good not yet obtained, we have "hope" and "despair." In respect of evil not yet present we have "fear" and "daring." But in respect of good obtained there is no irascible passion: because it is no longer considered in the light of something arduous, as stated above. But evil already present gives rise to the passion of "anger." Accordingly it is clear that in the concupiscible faculty there are three couples of passions; viz. love and hatred, desire and aversion, joy and sadness. In like manner there are three groups in the irascible faculty; viz. hope and despair, fear and daring, and anger which has no contrary passion. Consequently there are altogether eleven passions differing specifically; six in the concupiscible faculty, and five in the irascible; and under these all the passions of the soul are contained". Aquinas, *S. Th.* I-II, q. 23, a. 4.

⁷¹ CCC, 1730.

seeks (the good object), so there is a complementary relationship between the two powers. The interaction of the intellect and the will results in free choice.

The very nature of the will is to seek the good. Nobody really chooses the bad as such. If bad acts are chosen it is because some goodness is perceived to be in them. A thief, for instance, chooses to steal, which harms others and the thief's own character, and which may even go against the thief's conscience, but the thief chooses this bad act for the sake of the goods he or she wants to take, the thrill of escaping undetected, or some other motive that seems desirable. The good sought, then, is not necessarily morally good, but something that is perceived to be desirable in some way. On the negative side, something can be perceived as good inasmuch as it is the avoidance or pain (physical or emotional), danger or death.

The will, necessarily and always, desires the end of goodness. St Thomas Aquinas referred to this as the '*voluntas ut natura*' – the natural inclination of the will towards good. The will is not free in regard to goodness in general. The very nature of the will is that it is something that seeks the good. Nobody really chooses bad as such, but if bad acts are chosen it is because some goodness is perceived to be in them. The will necessarily desires the good as its end.⁷²

The presence of the good as a motive is indispensable for the will's operation. Even bad acts are chosen as mistaken means to happiness. Even suicide does not seek death per se, but the good of ending suffering.

Object of the Will

Often philosophers distinguish between material and formal object, here we briefly describe one and the other.

Material object: that which attracts the will, an actual thing. It may be a material thing like a good dinner, it may be a universal such as the notion of justice, or it may be a spiritual reality like the object of religious devotion.

Formal object: the material object considered under the aspect of good (the way it is considered). The will seeks *goodness* in general, and it may even be negative in the

⁷² Any action we choose is because of the goodness and happiness seen in it. As St Thomas writes: The word "necessity" is employed in many ways. For that which must be is necessary. Now that a thing must be may belong to it by an intrinsic principle -either material, as when we say that everything composed of contraries is of necessity corruptible- or formal, as when we say that it is necessary for the three angles of a triangle to be equal to two right angles. And this is "natural" and "absolute necessity." In another way, that a thing must be, belongs to it by reason of something extrinsic, which is either the end or the agent. On the part of the end, as when without it the end is not to be attained or so well attained: for instance, food is said to be necessary for life, and a horse is necessary for a journey. This is called "necessity of end," and sometimes also "utility." On the part of the agent, a thing must be, when someone is forced by some agent, so that he is not able to do the contrary. This is called "necessity of coercion." Now this necessity of coercion is altogether repugnant to the will. For we call that violent which is against the inclination of a thing. But the very movement of the will is an inclination to something. Therefore, as a thing is called natural because it is according to the inclination of nature, so a thing is called voluntary because it is according to the inclination of the will. Therefore, just as it is impossible for a thing to be at the same time violent and natural, so it is impossible for a thing to be absolutely coerced or violent, and voluntary. *S Th. I*, 80, 1. But necessity of end is not repugnant to the will, when the end cannot be attained except in one way: thus from the will to cross the sea, arises in the will the necessity to wish for a ship.

sense that something is good to avoid. The good may be real or only apparent. So the formal object of the will is the object considered as perceived as *good*.

Free Will and Action

The will gives rise to and is expressed in action and behaviour. Ordinarily, we do things because we want to. That is why human behaviour and human acts are generally "voluntary acts." A voluntary act is an action that consciously comes from me. The action is my own and I am conscious that it is mine. I account for my actions because I am responsible for them.

The voluntary character of actions or its absence is very important for law and ethics, in the determination of punishment and reward. Civil law in fact recognizes that to kill someone accidentally is different to pre-meditated murder, and it is given a different punishment. Nonetheless, the person who accidentally kills someone is still held responsible for that person's death. Moreover, there are acts that are "ours" despite being involuntary. An example of these acts is our own breathing. In classic philosophy, these are called "acts of man" to differentiate them from "human acts".

To determine the voluntariness of an action entails distinguishing two moments of the will. The first moment refers to the moment of *rational desire*. This is the tendency of the will towards a good grasped as an end. It is about what the goal, what we want to achieve, what we intend. This first moment is referred to willing in general. We want this or that; it is our voluntary intention to do/want this or that. This willing is **intention**. Intention is the minimum requirement for something to be considered voluntary.

The second moment refers to the moment of **choice**. Choosing is decision-making about what means we will use to achieve the goal. Before choosing, the intellect deliberates, weighing available options to obtain what we want to achieve. Once deliberation ends, the will chooses. To choose consists in preferring specific things among several (minimum of two) options. In summary, wanting is more general than choosing. We can want infinitely, want many kinds of ends, and want the possible and the impossible. In contrast, we limit choosing only to means that are specific because they have to be relevant to the achievement of a specific end.

Freedom and the Passions

The human person is ordered to beatitude by his deliberate acts: the passions or feelings he experiences can dispose him to it and contribute to it (CCC, 1762).

The passions are the feelings, the emotions or the movements of the sensible appetite - natural components of human psychology - which incline a person to act or not to act in view of what is perceived as good or evil. The principal passions are love and hatred, desire and fear, joy, sadness, and anger. The chief passion is love which is drawn by the attraction of the good. One can only love what is good, real or apparent⁷³

⁷³ *Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCCC)*, 370.

The first passion, from which the others arise, is love. It is part of the natural inclination to suitable goods at the sensitive level. This inclination is shared with other animals.⁷⁴ Love is a unitive force – it unites the lover to the thing loved. The passions of joy or delight accompany its attainment. The passions are part of a fundamentally positive dynamism by which creatures are able to incline to, and enjoy goods, avoid evils, and attain their temporal perfection. Its setting is a framework by which God, as Creator, makes all things and directs them back to Himself as their end.

As the sensitive appetite (the source of the passions) is found in both irrational animals and in human beings, we need to consider the passions in two ways. The sensitive appetite is the highest power an irrational animal has by which it reaches its perfection. Animals do not have spiritual souls; they flourish at a temporal level and so their ends can be reached through the sensitive powers. In human beings, however, the sensitive appetite, along with the reason and will, is a faculty of a spiritual soul. As such, we have a higher end and the higher powers of intellect and will by which we can direct our free acts towards its attainment. Human passions, sentiments or feelings, occur within this context.

Man, as master of his own acts (*dominus sui actus*), has been made by God and left in the hands of his own counsel.⁷⁵ We are not governed by instincts that, followed blindly, will make us attain our end or perfect us. Instead of instinct, human beings order and use their faculties for themselves. Human beings are corporeo-spiritual beings. The sensitive powers do not know the full truth about us or about reason or our spiritual dimension, so simply following our passions cannot lead to a truly flourishing human life or to higher goals. Simply following our passions would be responding to stimuli rather than acting in a way that is truly free.

If the sense appetite is to be directed to the end, human beings must direct it there. The intellect and the will are the faculties by which we can know our end and direct ourselves to it freely. As rational animals, humans cannot not be free, but must take responsibility for directing the intellect and will and the other powers with which they have been endowed, for this purpose, toward attainment of the end.

The passions are part of a fundamentally positive dynamism with which God has endowed human beings to help them flourish and reach their end and perfection. However, as human beings are not ruled by instinct, but can order and exercise their faculties freely, the passions assume a moral dimension. The passions may decrease the moral goodness of an act or even increase their moral evil. They can also increase the moral goodness of an act.

According to Aquinas, true freedom is neither about simply following the passions, nor about repressing or ignoring them to work just by intellect and will, but involves learning to order and use them well. This is achieved through the moral virtues. The virtuous life involves perfecting and using the sensitive appetite, under the guidance of the higher powers, ordering the passions so that they incline in order with right reason.

⁷⁴ True human love must involve the intellect and the will.

⁷⁵ *Gaudium et spes*, 17.

In irrational animals, knowledge comes through the senses. A chain of instinct is activated, where a non-rational power called the estimative power instinctively judges the suitability of the thing known in relation to itself (eg the dog and a juicy bone). If it is evaluated as suitable, the passion of desire is elicited from the sensitive appetite, and the dog will respond to the passion by running towards the bone. It is the passion that commands movement.

In human beings the sensitive appetite is not the highest faculty and it does not control what we do. The passions can be aroused, however it is reason that judges, and the will (the intellectual appetite) that commands our acts. The sensitive appetite obeys the reason and will, but it also has a capacity to influence both.⁷⁶ The passions therefore play a role in our free acts and can affect their moral value.

We don't have complete control over our passions: political dominion

While the sensitive appetite obeys the reason and will, we can't control it completely. It retains an important function of its own, indicating what we need, though only at a sensitive level, for our survival and well-being and enjoyment. As with other animals, our passions can be elicited by things we come to know without our choosing, for instance, the passion of desire can be aroused in response to the smell of fresh coffee, or aversion and disgust to finding a fly in our soup.

While we might not have chosen the passion, what we can do, however, is choose how we will act in response to our desire or aversion. I am not impelled by my desire, as my reason can consider whether that is what I truly want, weigh up the best option, and present its judgement to the will to choose. For instance, I can choose to have a coffee, or not to have a coffee so I can sleep well or lose weight or to offer it up for some intention. I can choose a small, medium or large coffee; I can buy one for me and one for a homeless person, or I can leap the counter and seize control of the machine. In short, my actions are not commanded by my desire; rather it is I who decide how to act, in the presence of this experience of desire. It is the will, not the passions that command action in human beings. So even though I may be strongly influenced by the passions, action is commanded by the will, or at least is consented to by the will. The sensitive appetite is not sufficient to command action without such consent. St Thomas Aquinas referred to this relationship between the passions and the intellect and will as 'political dominion'.

The passions are not under the complete control of the intellect and will because they respond to the senses and to the imagination, neither or which are, in themselves, guided by reason, just seeing or smelling something can arouse a passion even if we did not plan to see or smell it. The same thing can happen with the recall of the imagination, although the reason does also have the ability to command the imagination and so to incite or modify passions (i.e., a sudden memory or image can provoke a passion within us without our choosing it; but we can also bring on certain passions by imagining certain scenarios or situations, fantasising, etc).

Aquinas points out that, while we do not have control over passions arising from the external world, we are not entirely powerless. Lust, for instance, may be aroused by

⁷⁶ Except in rare cases where the reason is bypassed altogether e.g. in what we call 'crimes of passion'.

what we see. Even if we might not want to, lust may be aroused by something seen. But insofar as this is foreseeable, a person can take steps to prevent it. By choosing what to watch sensibly, thinking ahead, or by avoiding certain people or situations, a person can do something to avoid the passion of lust he or she does not want to experience.⁷⁷

The reason and will command the action we undertake. If a passion inclines us to certain behaviour, the reason steps in to make a judgement about it and the will gives the final command. Therefore, except in exceptional circumstances, as we shall see below, while we might not have control over our passions arising, we do choose what we finally *do*, and can be held morally responsible for it.

The key to understanding the sensitive appetites in man, then, is to see that they co-exist along with the higher faculties, the intellect and the will. As the powers of a rational soul, they are naturally open to the guidance and command of reason, while retaining some capacity of inclination and movement of their own.

The Morality of the Passions

The passions insofar as they are movements of the sensible appetite are neither good nor bad in themselves. They are good when they contribute to a good action and they are evil in the opposite case. They can be taken up into the virtues or perverted by the vices (CCCC, 371).

Having considered how the passions occur in man, we now turn to an examination of the relation between passions, and free human acts, in order to understand the relevance of the passions in the moral life and what makes them become morally good or bad.

Aquinas approaches this from the point of view of our end. If human beings have the higher faculties of intellect and will and can perform free acts, it is for the sake of a higher end. While the passions are held in common with animals, it is the acts of the reason and will which are proper to human beings, and by which we freely direct ourselves to our end. The acts by which we do this are called human, or voluntary acts. To perform a voluntary act requires reason, knowing why we are performing the act, and a will that commands the act, or at the least consents to it.

While the passions are not sufficient to direct us and towards our end, we can use them, guided by the reason and will, to help us attain it. Used well, they are a positive influence energising us to pursue and love the good to attain our ultimate happiness and end.

Can the passions make an act unfree?

[The passions] are morally qualified only to the extent that they effectively engage reason and will (CCC, 1767).

⁷⁷S. *Th* I-II, q. 17, a.7.

As we are interested in free human acts, we should first of all distinguish between voluntary and involuntary acts.

Voluntary acts ('*voluntas*' = will), are those that involve the reason knowing the purpose of the act and the will commanding or consenting to it. These are what we properly call 'human acts'. These acts have a moral value because they are free and so also we are responsible for them.

Non-voluntary acts are those that bypass the reason and will altogether, for instance breathing or choking. These are not freely performed and do not have a moral value. Similarly, the fact that a passion is aroused is not always within the control of the will, for instance when I smell the fresh coffee or suddenly remember a past event. This is why we call passions 'movements of the sensitive appetite' rather than free human acts. Suddenly feeling the passion here is not in itself morally good or bad. What matters is what we choose to do about it.

Occasionally a passion might be so sudden and intense as to render a person incapable of rational reflection so that neither the reason nor the will are involved in what follows. Actions performed in these rare situations may be considered non-voluntary, for instance crimes of passion. The general thing, however, is that we have some control over our passions through the reason and will, if not over their arising, over deciding how we are going to act. Almost always it is our will that commands or at least consents to, an act, following a rational judgement.⁷⁸

Involuntary acts: to call an act involuntary is to say that it happens against our will. These do not exist. The will is an appetite, an inclination. It cannot be forced to incline against itself. If the will consents, it is because it consents to consent, and this would make the act voluntary. Acts are either voluntary or non-voluntary.⁷⁹

When it comes to the passions, no passion renders an act involuntary. Our passions cannot force us to act against our will. They cannot force the will to consent. The passions, can, of course, influence our reason and will, as, for instance, when someone is influenced by fear, but, such acts can still be considered voluntary. The passions might even move the body without the consent of the will, but they cannot force the will to consent. If the will follows a passion it is because the will consents to it.

So I can forget about the passions?

Passions are said to be voluntary, "either because they are commanded by the will or because the will does not place obstacles in their way (CCC,1767).

⁷⁸ And the fact that a passion may lead to the same external result as a rational act does not mean that it has the same value. In the first case the action is performed without consideration of the end as occurs in the case of a rational free act.

⁷⁹ Of course the moral evaluation of the act can vary depending to the extent upon which the consent to act was influenced by fear, etc.

The answer is no. The passions are important in the moral life and in the exercise of freedom. While they are not moral in themselves, they help or hinder, increase or decrease the moral goodness of our acts, and so cannot be ignored. This is because, having reason and will, we are responsible for deciding what role the passions will play in our acts, after or even, as we shall see, before they arise. They can be part of a positive dynamism or they can obscure the reason and will, making it hard for us to act freely and wisely.

Consenting to a passion

When a passion arises and the will consents to it, the passion becomes voluntary, because the will chooses it. The reason judges the passion as being appropriate, and the will consents. That is, we choose the passion, making it voluntary (*'voluntas'* = will) and free. The passion is not morally good or bad until the reason has considered it and the will consented. As we said above, the will cannot be forced by the passions but consents to or rejects them following a rational judgement.

Passions may be elicited by external objects, e.g. coffee, and we cannot always control the presence of these external factors. At times, however, we might not wish a particular passion to arise and yet we choose a situation which arouses them (for instance an alcoholic may not want to experience a strong desire for a drink, but keeping a case of beer in the fridge is going to arouse it. To the extent that buying the beer and bringing it home will arouse an intense desire for a drink, the passion could be considered *voluntary in the cause* as we are able to foresee to some extent that the situation is likely to give rise to the passion and can take steps to avoid it.⁸⁰

Abdicating Responsibility: The Helmsman

I am the master of my fate, I am the captain of my soul.
(William Henley, 'Invictus')

Sometimes it can happen that the reason and will are *able* to respond to a passion and do not do so. If a passion arises and we neither consent to, nor reject it, can we, by simply not using our will, avoid any moral implications in following our passions? The answer is no. An act is non-voluntary if the reason and will are unable to act. If they are functional and we decide not to use them, that in itself is a voluntary act and we are responsible for what follows. The power to consider, judge, consent and command is present but the will *decides* not to exercise it.

Aquinas compares this to the helmsman of a ship. The helmsman is responsible for steering the ship. If the ship runs aground the helmsman will be responsible not only if he or she deliberately steers the ship onto rocks, but also if he or she is not at the wheel when on duty. The key is not simply that the helmsman ceases to steer, but that he can and ought to have been steering. When the reason and the will, which are responsible for commanding the faculties do not do so when they can and should, the results can be considered moral; that is, attributable to the will which, being able to intervene, has not willed to do so.

⁸⁰ This is the case with what is known as occasions of sin.

The reason and will can and should hold sway over the passions insofar as they have the capacity to do so. Hence the passions are voluntary insofar as they are not checked by a will which has the capacity to do so.

Commanding the passions

The power of the will is not limited to consenting to or not checking passions which are elicited by external objects. We can often arouse passions at will, and to the extent that a passion is willed, is voluntary. Even if we do not succeed in arousing the desired passion, the very act of desiring it is a free moral act.

Even when the passions are aroused without being commanded, for instance in response to fresh coffee, the reason and will can always command the *execution* of the act suggested by the passions. There is a space between the arousal of the passion and the execution of a movement in which the reason and will can almost always intervene and take responsibility for choosing how to respond to the passion and how to act. Execution does not follow immediately on the passions. Where animals execute what is commanded by the passions instinctively and instantly, in human beings reason and will command our acts.

Our passions influence our free acts by influencing the reason and will

The reason and will have political dominion over the passions, however the passions can also influence our reason and will in turn. This can affect the moral goodness or evil of our free acts as they influence our ability to really perceive and pursue the good and progress towards or away from, our end. We ourselves become good or evil according to how we act. This is another reason why ordering the passions through acquiring virtues increases our freedom.⁸¹

The passions influence our reason

The reason is essential in free acts as it considers and judges the facts to come to a decision about what we are going to do, looking at the different options under the aspect of good. The passions incline to particular things. When we choose, we apply a universal idea of good to a particular choice. This in turn influences the will as the reason presents it with its objective. The pull of the passions one way or another can hinder this as they may distract us from thinking things through. In addition, strong passions can obscure our reason in its perception of good. For instance revenge might seem good when I am angry and make certain actions attractive to me that I would not choose if I was calm and objective.⁸²

The good news is that:

⁸¹ See Chapter 3.

⁸² We don't only consider the thing but its fittingness for ourselves, i.e., whether it is good for us, a good means to reach our desired end. So when we are altered by an intense emotion, it will also affect what we see as good for us. 'As man is, so does the end seem to him'.

- the reason, if we reflect and are self-aware, can actually be aware of what is influencing it, evaluate it and take it into account. The reason can consider and judge the very passions which influence it.
- we can decide to delay a decision until the passion has subsided, for instance not making an important decision in the heat of the moment or when we are very emotional.
- we can delay an action until we know we will be able to carry it out more calmly and rationally, for instance putting off a conversation until later.
- We can also seek friendly advice from a person we trust who has our values and interests at heart but whose vision is less clouded by emotion in that moment.

When the passions influence the reason, they are called 'antecedent passions' as they precede the judgment of reason on which the goodness of the moral act depends, and may obscure it, diminishing the goodness of the act.⁸³

For the reason to resist the influence of a passion requires rectitude of the will. The will moves the intellect in the exercise of its act. If the will is not upright it can command the intellect not to think about certain things, to deliberate quickly and superficially, etc so as to choose to follow the passion without thinking it through.

The upright will orders the movements of the senses it appropriates to the good and to beatitude; an evil will succumbs to disordered passions and exacerbates them (CCC, 1768).

Increasing moral goodness: Consequent passion

It belongs to the perfection of the moral or human good that the passions be governed by reason (CCC, 1767).

The perfection of the moral good consists in man's being moved to the good not only by his will but also by his "heart" (CCC, 1775).

Once the will has had a say in the passions or the chance to have a say in them, the passions increase or decrease the moral goodness of our acts.⁸⁴ We call these passions 'consequent passions' as we are looking at them once they become part of a voluntary act.

⁸³ The virtue of prudence is about applying right reason in our acts. It is not always within the command of reason to apprehend the truth about something, for instance, when it is weighed down by very strong passions which may even at times be conflicting. What the reason can do, however, if the will is rightly disposed is suspend judgement, or direct itself to the consideration of other factors which the intensity of a passion may initially incline them to ignore. This is evidently easier when a man has a stronger knowledge of what is good and when there is a firm adherence of the will to this end.

⁸⁴ Moral evil results in the passions only when the reason and will abstain from the proper command or failed to command well in light of the end when they have the capacity to do so. St Thomas is at pains to clarify this point. He builds his argument around the stoic notion of the passions as evil. The Stoics use the term 'passion' to refer exclusively to those appetitive movements that exceed the limits of reason. St Thomas emphasises that insofar as the passions are in discord with reason they can be considered evil, but they are not evil *per se*.

When the intellect and will order and direct the passions well to pursue the good, they *increase* the moral goodness of an act. Moral goodness is not about trying to act without passion, but acting well, with passion.⁸⁵ It is part of human perfection that the passions not be repressed, but moderated by reason. This is the life of virtue. When the passions are obedient to right reason, they help to perfect us and our acts. Under the guidance of reason and will they help us achieve our end, and the dynamism these inclinations generate helps us get there.

Pursuing goods that do not fall within this order can be considered morally evil insofar as they distract and distance us from the end for which we were made. As we have said previously, given that we always seek a good, moral evil can be considered as a lack of due goodness, as when we seek a lesser good over a higher good (eg I plagiarise an essay instead of writing my own because I prefer the pleasure of Netflix to the good of getting an education. Netflix is good, but the choice here is morally bad because, as a student, my perception of where the real good lies is disordered and does not help me attain my end). A strong desire to watch a show can obscure my reason so my perception of the good is distorted; discouragement might influence me to think that the good of finishing the essay is unattainable; if my will is not upright it can command the reason not to think about it. The virtues come into play and help us to order our passions well, governed by a clear intellect and an upright will.

Once we have made a choice, the passions can be involved in our acts in two ways:

Redundancy: The higher part of the soul is intensely moved to something and the lower part follows. The resulting passions are a sign of the intensity of the will and so indicate greater moral goodness or evil.

Choice: A person considers the passion and *chooses* to be affected by it in order to work more promptly with its cooperation. This increases the goodness or evil of an action. This choosing to be affected by a passion can be by judging a passion we experience to be appropriate and *consenting* to it (e.g. deciding that our anger is appropriate in a particular situation) and consenting to it, making it part of our free act, or when they are *commanded*.

When we can direct our passions to what is chosen by reason and the will, we work with greater intensity. Managing the passions is not limited to preventing them from hindering the reason and will but includes engaging them as part of our appetitive dynamism to help us attain our end. The sensitive appetite is one of the faculties of human nature. When we not only govern it but engage it to use well, it is like engaging all of a plane's engines to fly. The sensitive appetite is one of the engines given to us by God and nature. It is an appetite, an inclination that, when inclining in accord with right reason, can help propel us in the same direction, towards our end.

⁸⁵ The presence of a feeling, however, is not required to make an act morally good. CCC, no. 1768: "Strong feelings are not decisive for the morality or the holiness of persons; they are simply the inexhaustible reservoir of images and affections in which the moral life is expressed. Passions are morally good when they contribute to a good action, evil in the opposite case. The upright will orders the movements of the senses it appropriates to the good and to beatitude; an evil will succumbs to disordered passions and exacerbates them. Emotions and feelings can be taken up into the virtues or perverted by the vices."

Moral perfection consists in man's being moved to the good not by his will alone, but also by his sensitive appetite (CCC, 1770).

As we said at the outset, the moral life, which is about perfection of the whole person, also involves the perfection of each of the faculties. It is not essential to the moral goodness of an act that it be performed with a corresponding passion, however it belongs to the perfection of moral good that man be moved to good not only with respect to will but also with respect to the sensitive appetite.

The relative freedom of the sensitive appetite means that, as it can act in a way which is either consistent or inconsistent with the end, it requires a stable disposition by which it can be habitually ordered to act in accordance with reason. Such stable dispositions are called habits. When they dispose the appetite to act suitably to our natural end, they are called *virtues*. The habits by which the sensitive appetite is habitually disposed to resist the reason or act in discord with it, and known as *vice*. The virtues order and perfect the relationship between the intellect and will, and make their acts morally good. The vices do the opposite. We will look at the way virtues increase our freedom, and also the relationship between freedom and grace in Chapter 3.

Man's end is supernatural and beyond the reach of his natural powers. However, as Aquinas observes, being free and able to obtain some knowledge of our end, we can turn to God that He may make us happy.⁸⁶

⁸⁶ Aquinas, *S. Th.*, I-II, q. 5, a. 5, ad. 1.

Appendix 1: Instincts and habits⁸⁷

The objects of instincts are the vegetative functions necessary for life and hence are called "vital". These are self-conservation through food and nutrition, and reproduction through sex. The basic animal instincts are therefore nutritive and sexual in nature. Psychologists agree that basic instincts exist in inferior animals, that more complex instincts exist in superior animals, and that less complex instincts exist in superior animals, too.

We find the following three basic tendencies in living beings: the tendency toward self-realization, the tendency towards self-conservation, and tendency towards self-reproduction. These basic tendencies are rooted in the body (or substantial intimacy).¹⁸

Tendencies are always instincts in animals. In man, instead, they are principled by knowledge from the beginning to the end. This implies that both human bodily and spiritual tendencies are principled by conscious intelligence. Therefore, tendencies in man are never instinctive. Vegetative functions such as nutrition and sex are therefore no longer merely biological needs. They become profoundly human, that is, rooted and present in subjective intimacy, in the "I" of self-consciousness. The sexual marital act is no longer a sexual act alone but a giving of the self (the "I"). The body is no longer pure body but becomes a medium of expression of the "I" self.

Tendencies in man are not instinctive because man can propose them to himself; he can control and direct them. He has no single way of behaving. The tendencies he possesses are flexible and have plasticity because he can and does possess an infinite capacity to learn and to learn at every stage of his operative powers (sense, intelligence, will). He learns to educate the basic tendencies into something apart from what the tendency is in its original form.

He educates the sexual tendency to be exercised within marriage, he educates his nutritive tendency so that he controls it through a diet, he educates his motor tendency to create a dance movement, he controls the tendency to see so that he learns to focus and observe (hence to see is not to look), he directs his tendency to hear so that he can listen attentively (hence to hear is not to listen), he controls the tendency to imagine so that he can plan, he disciplines the tendency to remember in order to select what is needed for an exam, etc. In short, marriage, restaurants, organizers, telescopes, audios, etc. are indicators of the triumph of rationality over instincts in humans.

Therefore, we can rightly say that human tendencies are not used simply to survive; we create lifestyles that are conducive to the refinement of all these tendencies. This refinement is the task of culture and education. In short, human tendencies are learned and developed by doing them with others and for others (e.g. altruistic, religious, and political goals) and by the cultivation of habits.

When man does not develop habits (bodily and or intellectual and or moral), then the inclinations are left to themselves together with their biological base (temperament) and the consequence is that the person only runs wild in his/her behaviour. It is only when they are assumed in subjective intimacy, consciously by the "I" or myself that they take a directed shape. That is to say, when man makes himself a project of himself. This is the task of developing and forming one's personality and character. This development is something that happens by our own doing and choice. Personality

⁸⁷ Source: Montague Brown, *The One-Minute Philosopher*, (Manchester, New Hampshire: Sophia Institute Press, 2001).

is the entirety of habits *Forged* by personal decisions and education. We say that one has "character" when the person has a mature personality. Maturity means having good stable habits or virtues. The proof that man is capable of habits is to show that he is capable of work, technology, language, science, law, morals, and religion. In other words, he has culture and he has history. He transcends the biological survival instinctive needs.

'God created man a rational being, conferring on him the dignity of a person who can initiate and control his own actions. "God willed that man should be 'left in the hand of his own counsel,' so that he might of his own accord seek his Creator and freely attain his full and blessed perfection by cleaving to him.'" CCC, n. 1730

Freedom and Evil

- The conflict of the will between good and evil
- As has been seen, the will has a natural tendency towards the good. When the good is possessed, it produces pleasure. However, when evil is present, then pain is experienced. If the good is a difficult one, then there is hope of achieving it. If, however, the evil is unavoidable, there is fear. In any case, it is evident that the cause of pain is evil.
- Evil is the privation of a due good, an absence of life, order, and fullness: deformation, corruption, limitations, finitude, weakness. Evil is what is not fitting; the good is what is fitting. Evil is the lack of freedom, of self-realization.
- The will, insofar as it is directed towards the good, is determined. However, insofar as it is exercised (election), a person can choose between different goods. It can happen that the intellect errs in the perception of a good and thus presents to the will an apparent good. Note that the will never moves towards an evil. If it tends towards something, it is because of the aspect of good that it has. Therefore, when these apparent goods do not completely fulfil a person, he experiences disappointment.
- However, evil can also appear involuntarily. These are those brought about by others, by one's own limited nature, by nature itself.
- Goodness of human nature and habitual disorders (disordered tendencies and original sin)
- Human nature by itself is good. However, since decisions persons make determine them, evil choices can end up developing evil habits (vices) in persons. Likewise, socio-cultural factors, influences, etc. are built into the passive synthesis of a person, bringing about disordered tendencies, i.e., tendencies directed towards what is not fitting to a person.

- Then, there is also the experience of original sin. Human nature, while good, is wounded, making it prone to ignorance, sickness, loss of control over the passions, death.
- The meaning of pain and the experience of individual limitations
- The experience of pain brought about by evil does not have a negative value. Depending upon how one faces up to it, it can contribute to one's self-realization. Modern society is a society that shuns pain and suffering.
- Meaning of pain and suffering:
 - 1) In the first place, one has to accept pain and suffering as a fact. Though we are not free in the face of factors that bring them about, one can freely decide to accept them. Only when one does so can one see their positive value: accepting pain helps man grow and mature because it makes him stronger.
 - 2) Secondly, pain produces catharsis or purification, both spiritually and physically. One is able to see the distinction between what is truly important or not in one's life. It elevates man above himself because it shows him how to distance himself from his desires.
 - 3) Third, we can conclude that the true meaning of pain appears if there is a motive and end for which we accept suffering. In this sense, pain becomes sacrifice, it points to something beyond oneself.
- Finding oneself in the giving of one's self
- In the final analysis, what gives meaning to pain is love. One is able to accept pain when it is seen as benefiting the loved one. Thus, it entails going out of oneself for the sake of another.
- As has been seen, when something is done out of love, one also achieves self-realization in the process. One finds meaning in pain.
- The burden of a responsibility is also an opportunity to exercise mature freedom; the burden of a restriction is mere limitation.

Freedom and license must not be confused: freedom embraces responsibility and is guided by reason and virtue; license is choice without restraint.

Catechism of the Catholic Church

THE MORALITY OF HUMAN ACTS

1749 Freedom makes man a moral subject. When he acts deliberately, man is, so to speak, the father of his acts. Human acts, that is, acts that are freely chosen in consequence of a judgment of conscience, can be morally evaluated. They are either good or evil.

I. The Sources of Morality

1750 The morality of human acts depends on:

- the object chosen;
- the end in view or the intention;
- the circumstances of the action.

The object, the intention, and the circumstances make up the "sources," or constitutive elements, of the morality of human acts.

1751 The object chosen is a good toward which the will deliberately directs itself. It is the matter of a human act. The object chosen morally specifies the act of the will, insofar as reason recognizes and judges it to be or not to be in conformity with the true good. Objective norms of morality express the rational order of good and evil, attested to by conscience.

1752 In contrast to the object, the intention resides in the acting subject. Because it lies at the voluntary source of an action and determines it by its end, intention is an element essential to the moral evaluation of an action. The end is the first goal of the intention and indicates the purpose pursued in the action. The intention is a movement of the will toward the end: it is concerned with the goal of the activity. It aims at the good anticipated from the action undertaken. Intention is not limited to directing individual actions, but can guide several actions toward one and the same purpose; it can orient one's whole life toward its ultimate end. For example, a service done with the end of helping one's neighbour can at the same time be inspired by the love of God as the ultimate end of all our actions. One and the same action can also be inspired by several intentions, such as performing a service in order to obtain a favour or to boast about it.

1753 A good intention (for example, that of helping one's neighbour) does not make behaviour that is intrinsically disordered, such as lying and calumny, good or just. The end does not justify the means. Thus the condemnation of an innocent person cannot be justified as a legitimate means of saving the nation. On the other hand, an added bad intention (such as vainglory) makes an act evil that, in and of itself, can be good (such as almsgiving).

1754 The circumstances, including the consequences, are secondary elements of a moral act. They contribute to increasing or diminishing the moral goodness or evil of human acts (for example, the amount of a theft). They can also diminish or increase the agent's responsibility (such as acting out of a fear of death). Circumstances of themselves cannot change the moral quality of acts themselves; they can make neither good nor right an action that is in itself evil.

II. Good Acts and Evil Acts

1755 A morally good act requires the goodness of the object, of the end, and of the circumstances together. An evil end corrupts the action, even if the object is good in itself (such as praying and fasting "in order to be seen by men").

The object of the choice can by itself vitiate an act in its entirety. There are some concrete

acts - such as fornication - that it is always wrong to choose, because choosing them entails a disorder of the will, that is, a moral evil.

1756 It is therefore an error to judge the morality of human acts by considering only the intention that inspires them or the circumstances (environment, social pressure, duress or emergency, etc.) which supply their context. There are acts which, in and of themselves, independently of circumstances and intentions, are always gravely illicit by reason of their object; such as blasphemy and perjury, murder and adultery. One may not do evil so that good may result from it.

1757 The object, the intention, and the circumstances make up the three "sources" of the morality of human acts.

1758 *The object chosen morally specifies the act of willing accordingly as reason recognizes and judges it good or evil.*

1759 *"An evil action cannot be justified by reference to a good intention"* (cf St. Thomas Aquinas, *Dec. praec.* 6). The end does not justify the means.

1760 A morally good act requires the goodness of its object, of its end, and of its circumstances together.

1761 There are concrete acts that it is always wrong to choose, because their choice entails a disorder of the will, i.e., a moral evil. One may not do evil so that good may result from it.

THE MORALITY OF THE PASSIONS

1762 The human person is ordered to beatitude by his deliberate acts: the passions or feelings he experiences can dispose him to it and contribute to it.

I. Passions

1763 The term "passions" belongs to the Christian patrimony. Feelings or passions are emotions or movements of the sensitive appetite that incline us to act or not to act in regard to something felt or imagined to be good or evil.

1764 The passions are natural components of the human psyche; they form the passageway and ensure the connection between the life of the senses and the life of the mind. Our Lord called man's heart the source from which the passions spring.

1765 There are many passions. The most fundamental passion is love, aroused by the attraction of the good. Love causes a desire for the absent good and the hope of obtaining it; this movement finds completion in the pleasure and joy of the good possessed. The apprehension of evil causes hatred, aversion, and fear of the impending evil; this movement ends in sadness at some present evil, or in the anger that resists it.

1766 "To love is to will the good of another." All other affections have their source in this first movement of the human heart toward the good. Only the good can be loved. Passions "are evil if love is evil and good if it is good."

II. Passions and Moral Life

1767 In themselves passions are neither good nor evil. They are morally qualified only to the extent that they effectively engage reason and will. Passions are said to be voluntary, "either because they are commanded by the will or because the will does not place obstacles in their way." It belongs to the perfection of the moral or human good that the passions be governed by reason.

1768 Strong feelings are not decisive for the morality or the holiness of persons; they are simply the inexhaustible reservoir of images and affections in which the moral life is expressed. Passions are morally good when they contribute to a good action, evil in the opposite case. The upright will orders the movements of the senses it appropriates to the good and to beatitude; an evil will succumbs to disordered passions and exacerbates them. Emotions and feelings can be taken up into the virtues or perverted by the vices.

1769 In the Christian life, the Holy Spirit himself accomplishes his work by mobilizing the whole being, with all its sorrows, fears and sadness, as is visible in the Lord's agony and passion. In Christ human feelings are able to reach their consummation in charity and divine beatitude.

1770 Moral perfection consists in man's being moved to the good not by his will alone, but also by his sensitive appetite, as in the words of the psalm: "My heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God."

1771 The term "passions" refers to the affections or the feelings. By his emotions man intuits the good and suspects evil.

1772 The principal passions are love and hatred, desire and fear, joy, sadness, and anger.

1773 In the passions, as movements of the sensitive appetite, there is neither moral good nor evil. But insofar as they engage reason and will, there is moral good or evil in them.

1774 Emotions and feelings can be taken up in the virtues or perverted by the vices.

1775 The perfection of the moral good consists in man's being moved to the good not only by his will but also by his "heart."

Freedom and Responsibility

“Most modern freedom is at root fear. It is not so much that we are too bold to endure rules; it is rather that we are too timid to endure responsibilities.”⁸⁸

Motivation precedes human action; consequences follow it. The exercise of freedom cannot fail to consider the possible consequences of each choice: for oneself and for others. In fact, this foreseeing of the consequences is normally a part of motivation itself.

Viktor Frankl maintains that consciousness of responsibility is the foundation of human existence; and also suggests that fear of responsibility can provoke that flight from freedom which we have already noted.⁸⁹

No sense of personal freedom can be genuine if it is not accompanied by an equally personal sense of responsibility. Since every action has its consequences, anyone who feels free to direct his choices along one particular way rather than another must realize that he shares in the consequences for others which necessarily derive from his free choices. If I deliberately run a red light, I make myself liable to a fine or responsible for an accident. The more likely the consequence, the more I should foresee it, and act responsibly. The less foreseeable the consequence, the less the responsibility.

The sense of responsibility serves to confirm the awareness of being personally free. The action is mine; and precisely for this reason, I am at least a partial cause of the consequences. The person who will not accept responsibility does not understand the true scope and meaning of his or her freedom, is not fully in possession of it, or is perhaps afraid of it.

The sense of responsibility also brings out the participative meaning of social life. / can freely produce positive consequences for the life of others.

Today the gravest threat to freedom may well be a generalized lack of responsibility. It has been said that there are few dangers greater to society than the presence in it of people with nothing to lose. Feeling free without at the same time feeling responsible makes people destructive. A society hardly merits the name of a free society and may not long survive as one if its members are not responsible. Responsibility no less than freedom has become the test of a truly human society. And of course it is not just society alone that can suffer harm from those who think they have “nothing to lose.” *They*, despite their frame of mind, do have something to lose and in that mental state are quite likely to lose it.

⁸⁸ G.K. Chesterton, *What's Wrong with the World*, (Mineola, New York: Dover Publications, 2012), p. 154.

⁸⁹ V. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, xx

Freedom and Love

The reason for our being rational and free is vocation'.⁹⁰

When speaking of freedom, we cannot avoid referring to love, since love has every title to be regarded as the maximum expression of freedom. It is in fact only if the *free* aspect of love is stressed that its dignity is safeguarded. This ultimately means saving *our* dignity, as beings capable not only of giving or receiving love but also of understanding and appraising different *types of love*, that is, the various possibilities of loving that are presented in life, and of reacting according to our criterion of choice toward a concrete love.

The common sense of humanity has always considered love to be an absolutely necessary element of happiness. The person who does not know how to love, or who is not loved by anybody, is truly unfortunate and unhappy. If this is so, it confirms the anthropological presupposition we are following: man does not fulfil himself *alone*; he needs a complement. If he does not understand the true nature of love, if he cannot distinguish between love and its counterfeits, if he is unable to love, he will not find fulfilment.

Being human always points, and is directed, to something or someone, other than oneself--be it a meaning to fulfill or another human being to encounter. The more one *forgets* himself - by giving himself to a cause to serve or another person to love - the more human he is and the more he actualizes himself. What is called self-actualization is not an attainable aim at all, for the simple reason that the more one would strive for it, the more he would miss it. In other words, self-actualization is possible only as a side-effect of self-transcendence."⁹¹

Love involves an attraction between two persons which unites them in a desire to share major aspects of life. There is the love of friendship by which, if it is genuine, each friend not only enjoys the companionship of the other but also desires what is good for him or her. The love of friends is so characterized, but does not call for any further special commitment. Some friendships last a lifetime; others are temporary. Married love, in contrast, goes much farther. The person who marries chooses not only to love, but to do so with a distinctive love that is committed, exclusive and permanent.

"Love is a centrifugal tendency that moves from inside to outside, but which needs an external stimulus to begin its movement. Therefore loving someone means coming out of oneself and being prepared to share. To be loved is to be treated as an exception, with special consideration."⁹² When love is reciprocated, we can speak of two freedoms that meet in a movement toward mutual gift and acceptance of each other. To fall in love means to realize that one is incomplete, and cannot be whole or happy without the loved one.⁹³ And to *want* to fall in love, even when one does not yet feel attracted to any concrete person, is equally a sign of the sense of incompleteness.

⁹⁰ Paul VI, *Omelia*, 20.4.1975. Available in Italian at http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/it/homilies/1975/documents/hf_p-vi_hom_19750420.html

⁹¹ V. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, p. 115.

⁹² E. Rojas: *Una Teoria della Felicità*. trans. G. Ferrero, L. Ferrero, (Cinisell: San Paolo Edizioni, 1988) p. 92.

⁹³ R. Yepes: *Fundamentos de Antropología: un ideal de la excelencia humana*, (Pamplona: Ediciones Universidad de Navarra, 1996), p.273.

To fall in love produces a number of paradoxical consequences. The person who begins to love can no longer feel self-sufficient. His need for someone else is experienced in too deep a way. But this very dependence opens the person's horizons as the conviction grows that life promises even more than he or she had first sensed. Gordon Allport, former Professor of Psychology at Harvard University, writes: "Hitherto self-sufficient, the lover finds himself no longer so. The welfare of another is more important than his own. In this way" -Allport adds- "*the self is extended.*"⁹⁴ The importance of this last conclusion cannot be exaggerated. When a person loves, the closed circle of the individual is broken, opening not only toward the person loved but, if the love is real, toward the whole outer world.

Life and the world take on new radiance for the lover. A sign of true love is the new joy toward life that it induces. "The enthusiasm that love awakens is capable of renewing even what seemed totally sunk in inertia. Love gives meaning to life. The human being who discovers genuine love is often said to have been reborn, to have changed, or to have recaptured the meaning of everything. Without love it is as if a decisive and harmonizing component were missing in this puzzle of life and happiness, a component capable of leading the person to make sense of the maze of contradictions in which each of us seems caught."⁹⁵

For the first time in my life I saw the truth as it is set into song by so many poets, proclaimed as the final wisdom by so many thinkers. The truth - that Love is the ultimate and highest goal to which man can aspire. Then I grasped the meaning of the greatest secret that human poetry and human thought and belief have to impart: The salvation of man is through love and in love.⁹⁶

Doing Someone Else's Will

Understanding how love and freedom relate can also help to dispel many frequent but mistaken notions about the relationship between freedom and obedience: the idea, for instance, that to obey-which implies doing someone else's will-means to renounce your own will, and reveals an immaturity of character by which you let yourself be placed in an alienating situation of inferiority and dependence.

But is this always so? Is immaturity shown by the team player, or by the soldier who follows the indications of his captain? Coaches of sports teams frequently discard talented players because they find them too *immature* -too self-centred or too preoccupied with their own "independence" -to fit in with others.

An enforced commitment (for instance, that of a slave to his master) is degrading and does violence to freedom. A

⁹⁴ G. W. Allport, *Personality: A Psychological Interpretation*, (London : Constable, 1938), p. 217.

⁹⁵ E. Rojas: *Una Teoria della Felicitá*, p. 92.

⁹⁶ V. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, p. 52.

commitment inspired by love is uplifting and allows a constant exercise of freedom charged with a sense of fulfillment. Here it is not even an adequate analysis to say that love makes it easy to "do someone else's will."

Behind this, there can still be the idea that a commitment calls on a person to *renounce* his own will. That is not so. In a certain sense, it could not legitimately be so; for no one can be called on to abdicate the exercise of his will without thereby giving up one of his titles to full humanity.

The fact is that a commitment is a determination of a person's *own* will. I do not "abandon" my own will to do someone else's.

I *exercise* my will-for good and personal reasons-in choosing what someone else has also chosen. Here there is not absence, but rather a stronger presence, of personal choice. I will to make someone else's will my own.

There can be opposition between two wills, or there can be perfect, mutual, and willed identity. A person in love wants to do the will of the loved one: he *wills* to do it. The other person's will is what his will yearns for; he comes out of himself so as to find what he wants.

Freedom and Authority

How can human freedom be preserved in the face of the massive and impersonal business or political forces of the modern state which so dominate the individual? Is there any way of keeping a sense of freedom when the individual is enmeshed in the legal restraints of modern life? Yes –if the laws correspond to justice, and if people have been grounded in love for justice itself, considered as a basic interpersonal value on which the whole of social life needs to be built.

Social or legal authority suggests "rules" –rules and regulations which, by inexorable tendency, seem to multiply indefinitely. The hankering after an existence free from institutional or corporate regulations underlies many currents of modern thought. Popular works of social criticism argue for a new way of life that will be more spontaneous, more natural, more unregulated. To a large extent, this radical reaction is understandable. Modern man is so exasperated at having so long had to obey soulless forces –government, business corporations, etc. –so fed up with being regulated, that he now does not want to have any rules or to obey anyone other than himself.

Nevertheless, both social and personal living need rules. The completely unregulated society tends to disintegration: and so does the unregulated self. "Obeying self" often means following the whims of the moment; and that too tends to be soulless, or soul-destroying. Not a few of our impulses can enslave us more

than any bureaucracy or police force, and alienate us from others. Freedom, the sensation and the reality of personal freedom, does not depend on having no regulations, no directions, no goals-just drifting-but on self-regulation in the search for worthwhile values, and in the free choice and steady ability to respond to those values.

The power to choose is at the service of the power to complete yourself... Each person is a reality given and a reality to be achieved. What matters is not so much what you choose, but who you become as a result of your choices. This is not to say that what you choose is unimportant. On the contrary, the value of what you choose, just as the value of what you love, has a decisive bearing on the personal worth that you acquire as a result of your choices.

Catechism of the Catholic Church

MAN'S FREEDOM

1730 God created man a rational being, conferring on him the dignity of a person who can initiate and control his own actions. "God willed that man should be 'left in the hand of his own counsel,' so that he might of his own accord seek his Creator and freely attain his full and blessed perfection by cleaving to him."

Man is rational and therefore like God; he is created with free will and is master over his acts.

I. Freedom and Responsibility

1731 Freedom is the power, rooted in reason and will, to act or not to act, to do this or that, and so to perform deliberate actions on one's own responsibility. By free will one shapes one's own life. Human freedom is a force for growth and maturity in truth and goodness; it attains its perfection when directed toward God, our beatitude.

1732 As long as freedom has not bound itself definitively to its ultimate good which is God, there is the possibility of choosing between good and evil, and thus of growing in perfection or of failing and sinning. This freedom characterizes properly human acts. It is the basis of praise or blame, merit or reproach.

1733 The more one does what is good, the freer one becomes. There is no true freedom except in the service of what is good and just. The choice to disobey and do evil is an abuse of freedom and leads to "the slavery of sin."

1734 Freedom makes man responsible for his acts to the extent that they are voluntary. Progress in virtue, knowledge of the good, and asceticism enhance the mastery of the will over its acts.

1735 Imputability and responsibility for an action can be diminished or even nullified by ignorance, inadvertence, duress, fear, habit, inordinate attachments, and other psychological or social factors.

1736 Every act directly willed is imputable to its author:

Thus the Lord asked Eve after the sin in the garden: "What is this that you have done?" He asked Cain the same question. The prophet Nathan questioned David in the same way after he committed adultery with the wife of Uriah and had him murdered. An action can be indirectly voluntary when it results from negligence regarding something one should have known or done: for example, an accident arising from ignorance of traffic laws.

1737 An effect can be tolerated without being willed by its agent; for instance, a mother's exhaustion from tending her sick child. A bad effect is not imputable if it was not willed either as an end or as a means of an action, e.g., a death a person incurs in aiding someone in danger. For a bad effect to be imputable it must be foreseeable and the agent must have the possibility of avoiding it, as in the case of manslaughter caused by a drunken driver.

1738 Freedom is exercised in relationships between human beings. Every human person, created in the image of God, has the natural right to be recognized as a free and responsible being. All owe to each other this duty of respect. The right to the exercise of freedom, especially in moral and religious matters, is an inalienable requirement of the dignity of the human person. This right must be recognized and protected by civil authority within the limits of the common good and public order.

1743 *"God willed that man should be left in the hand of his own counsel (cf Sir 15:14), so that he might of his own accord seek his creator and freely attain his full and blessed perfection by cleaving to him"* (GS 17).

1744 Freedom is the power to act or not to act, and so to perform deliberate acts of one's own. Freedom attains perfection in its acts when directed toward God, the sovereign Good.

1745 Freedom characterizes properly human acts. It makes the human being responsible for acts of which he is the voluntary agent. His deliberate acts properly belong to him.

1746 The imputability or responsibility for an action can be diminished or nullified by ignorance, duress, fear, and other psychological or social factors.

1747 The right to the exercise of freedom, especially in religious and moral matters, is an inalienable requirement of the dignity of man. But the exercise of freedom does not entail the putative right to say or do anything.

1748 "For freedom Christ has set us free" (Gal 5:1).

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Chapter 2: Freedom: The Basis for Living as a Child of God

Introduction

St Josemaría loved freedom, because we need freedom to be able to love. In this chapter we will look at what our Father taught about freedom and about how two foundational ideas divine filiation and the sanctification of work are related to it.

St Josemaría taught and wrote a lot about freedom. For him, love for freedom and love for God were two sides of the same coin, as “without freedom we cannot love.”⁹⁷ True love is always free. For St Josemaría the greatest act of freedom was loving God, choosing to respond to God’s love.⁹⁸ Thus he said, “I have spoken, or rather shouted, about my love for personal freedom’.⁹⁹ This love for freedom was also an integral part of St Josemaría’s personality. He appreciated supported spontaneous and simple behaviour, and trusted more in people’s personal initiatives and decisions than in bureaucratic rules and protocols. He affirmed the personalities of others and opened up horizons for their development.¹⁰⁰

St Josemaría’s love for freedom relates to two other central elements of his teaching:

- a) the awareness of one’s divine filiation

The entire spiritual inheritance St Josemaría left to his children is founded on the certainty that we are children of God and that to be a ‘child’ means that we live freely, in what St Paul calls the ‘glorious freedom’ (Rom 8:21) that Christ won for us on the Cross.¹⁰¹ To be ‘born of God’ is to be born free.

- b) the sanctification of ordinary work.

With regard to the sanctification of work, the role of the Christian in the middle of the world demands that we be able to exercise our freedom as an essential characteristic of lay secularity. Saint Josemaría reminded his children to use their freedom responsibly, respecting the freedom of others and promoting social conditions which would foster its overall growth and development.

⁹⁷ Notes taken from his preaching, 10-IV-1974 (AGP, P01, V-1974, p. 86); cf. Saint Josemaría, *Conversations*, no. 104

⁹⁸ Saint Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 25.

⁹⁹ Saint Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 32.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. A Llano, “Libertad y Trabajo”, in Aa. Vv., *Trabajo y Espíritu. Sobre el sentido del trabajo desde las enseñanzas de Josemaría Escrivá en el contexto del pensamiento contemporáneo*, (Pamplona: Eunsa, 2004), p. 185

¹⁰¹ Saint Josemaría, *Instruction*, 8.12.1941, no. 59.

Sources, Context & Historical Background

Sources for Saint Josemaría's understanding of freedom

Saint Josemaría's teaching about freedom stems from the charism he received from God to be the founder of Opus Dei. Nevertheless, his teaching was grounded in the meditation and study of Sacred Scripture as well as the teachings of the Magisterium on the subject from the time of Leo XIII onwards. More specifically, his teaching was influenced by the theology of Saint Augustine and Saint Thomas Aquinas, both frequently recommended by the Magisterium, and from whom his own understanding developed, always under the light of the charism he had personally received.

St Josemaría's teaching on freedom is faithful to, and consistent with, that contained in traditional Catholic doctrine: freedom is a gift from God which we possess by virtue of our spiritual soul. It is a gift that is given with a purpose: to be united with God in love, seeking the perfection of the world and oneself in accordance with the Divine Will. This freedom was wounded by sin and is now redeemed in Christ who, by dying on the Cross, obtained the gift of the Holy Spirit for all those who believe in him. 'For freedom Christ has set us free; stand fast therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery' (Gal 5:1). In the Holy Spirit, we can now live as children of God in Christ, that is, we can identify ourselves with him through love, directing all creation to the glory of God the Father.

20th Century Context of Freedom

Saint Josemaría's message about freedom was part of the charism he received from God as founder of Opus Dei.¹⁰² His writings display a unique sensitivity and appreciation for the gift of freedom unusual in his early 20th century social and historical context, due to the novelty of the spirit and message which he received on the 2nd October, 1928, a spirit "as old and as new as the Gospel".¹⁰³

The 20th century saw the rise of totalitarianism ideologies (eg, Communism and National Socialism/Fascism), implemented in totalitarian regimes, and Saint Josemaría often prayed for those people and nations suffering unjust dominion and oppression. At the same time, in other places, there was a general spread of libertinism or licentiousness; "Never have men spoken so much about freedom as they do now.... Everyone demands freedom, in everything it seems that more and more can be given into."¹⁰⁴ Saint Josemaría referred to the spread of a 'false freedom,' one that sought to operate without any natural purpose, norm, responsibility and, ultimately, without any meaning. It was a more subtle and insidious error than that of a dictatorship, and yet it mortally weakened freedom from within.

¹⁰² J.J. Sanguineti, "La libertad en el centro del mensaje del Beato Josemaría Escrivá", in Malo, A., *La grandezza della vita quotidiana*, (Rome: Edusc, 2002), vol. 3, 81.

¹⁰³ Saint Josemaría, *Conversations*, no. 24.

¹⁰⁴ Saint Josemaría, *Letter*, 30.4.1946, no. 1.

Both errors had a common basis: the claim to impose one's own will as the unique, supreme norm of conduct, either for oneself or on others. Saint Josemaría rejected both extremes. He did not limit himself to merely pointing out errors, but tried to confront the crisis by promoting genuine freedom. We will examine the content of this freedom in this chapter.

Voluntarism, Duty & Obedience

The reason and the will both play an essential role in the true exercise of freedom, along with the heart. Over time, however, a train of thought where freedom is achieved by exercise of the will alone, denying reason, in particular, a role, resulted in what is known as **moral voluntarism**. Moral voluntarism is about doing something because it is your duty, without the need to understand why or to involve the heart.

In the early centuries of Christian theology, St Augustine, writing about human freedom, distinguished between 'freedom' (*libertas*) and the ability to choose, or free choice (*liberum arbitrium*). Everyone had the ability to choose between options (*liberum arbitrium*), whereas one only attained true freedom (*libertas*) when one ordered one's acts in relation what was good for one. While everybody has free choice, not everybody uses it to become truly free. Freedom was not simply the ability to choose between options, but the ability to fully 'own' one's actions, directing them to the true good. In freedom (*libertas*) there was an essential connection between truth and goodness. Jesus Christ Himself confirmed this relationship when he said 'the truth shall make you free' (Jn 8:32).

In the late Middle Ages, however, the relationship between truth and goodness became obscured. Where for St Augustine knowing the truth would help one make good choices, the nominalist philosophers were preoccupied with the question of whether God wanted something because it was good, or whether it was good because God wanted it. In reality, God commands what is truly good because it is good for us, and prohibits what is bad because it is bad for us. These influential philosophers held, however, that what makes something good is simply that God wants it. If God were to say that murder is wrong today but right tomorrow, then tomorrow murder would be right. God's will is arbitrary, the moral law can actually change according to his will for different times and places.¹⁰⁵ There is nothing about a human being, an action or the world, that provides any ethical orientation as to right or wrong.¹⁰⁶

While it might sound academic, this conclusion had dire consequences. The natural moral law, ('*ordinatio rationis*', the ordination of my own rational nature) becomes an

¹⁰⁵ The proliferation of contradictory moral teachings amongst various Christian communities attests, in part, to this erroneous theoretical foundation.

¹⁰⁶ In the 14th century, William of Ockham introduced an ontological separation of truth and goodness in his attempt to defend the absolute freedom of God. He argued that if God could not want one thing today and another thing tomorrow, his freedom was not absolute. Ockham's solution was to make God's freedom arbitrary – what God wanted was 'good' simply because God wanted it, not because of an ethically intelligible content that inheres in the creature or action itself. Thus, God does not create a world 'with meaning' but rather, he gives meaning to it at each moment and not in a way that is intrinsically or necessarily coherent. Any 'necessary' or required coherence would be to place a 'limitation' on God's absolute freedom.

external sign of God's legislative will. Human beings cannot know what is good 'in itself'. The only reason something is good is that God has arbitrarily decided so, and the only way human beings can know what is good is by being told what God has decided. Human intelligence has no other role in discovering the truth or discerning what is good, than understanding the content of God's rules. The purpose or aim of those rules is irrelevant.

Effectively, these philosophers took away most of the role of the reason in free human acts. We no longer needed to understand the reason for our actions or their relationship to goodness or happiness, to what made an action good or bad, we just needed to follow the rules. I do not need to know *why* something is good or bad but only that it is good because God has commanded it or bad because he has prohibited it.

This provided the foundation for an understanding of freedom we still see today: **moral voluntarism**, as well as a misunderstanding and practice of the Christian virtue of **obedience**. As the reason is barred from understanding the truth or goodness of things in themselves and their relationship to the person, it is left frustrated. The only role left to it is to obey the will of God out of duty and with the promise of reward or punishment.¹⁰⁷ From this perspective, living as a child of God is just about compliance and obeying rules. This is a far cry from living with the conviction that "The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul. The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart, the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes."¹⁰⁸

Obeying moral laws and religious commands may afford a sense of security and peace, not to mention the assurance of one's righteousness. However, if God's will is arbitrary and something that is only good because God says so, rather than God saying so because it is good and true, then God's will inevitably come to be seen as irrational or non-existent; God's commands are impositions and restrictions that bear no relationship to our true good, nature or happiness. For many people today, religion and faith are arbitrary and irrelevant. The Church is one more voice amongst others, proclaiming an arbitrary morality for human freedom that seems not only irrelevant but difficult and tiresome to live by. The moral life is about running on will power, to obey the rules. This is a restrictive, distorted view of God's gift of freedom to us.

It is beneath the dignity of the human person to be forced to act in a way that is opposed to his or her own reasoning. Similarly, an exaltation of reason which separates it from faith, or of a personal freedom which separates it from the true and the good, also ends up impoverishing reason and freedom itself.¹⁰⁹ As the history of the 20th century shows us, when human beings are deprived of the transcendental light of faith which illuminates our ultimate end, we turn to all sorts of ideologies which ultimately enslave us. In the words of G. K. Chesterton, "When men choose not to believe in God, they do not thereafter believe in nothing, they then become capable of believing in anything."¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ the natural moral law is then no longer *ordinatio rationis* but *ordinatio voluntatis* (an ordination by the will)

¹⁰⁸ Ps. 19: 7-8

¹⁰⁹ On one hand, it is entirely legitimate that a secular society function with a certain degree of independence from religious influences given that many of its concerns are not ecclesiastical or spiritual per se. Similarly,

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Saint Josemaría was deeply aware of the concerns and questions of his day including the tensions around human freedom, and went out to meet them with a Christian response. “It is not without some design of Divine Providence that, in these modern times, there is such a sensitivity to the natural value of freedom, which can only find its full realisation and perfect accomplishment when elevated to the order of grace.”¹¹¹

Unlike many Christian writers of the period, Saint Josemaría was optimistic about human freedom and expressed a strong regard for it to an extent that seemed idealistic, if not radical, at the time. “I have spent my whole life preaching personal freedom, with personal responsibility. I have sought freedom throughout the world and I'm still looking for it, just like Diogenes trying to find an honest man. And every day I love it more. Of all the things on earth, I love it most.”¹¹²

The connection between freedom and responsibility, between the human will and divine grace, is essential to our understanding of St Josemaría's passionate love for freedom, a connection which will hopefully become clear in later sections.¹¹³

St Josemaría on Freedom & Obedience

In 1888, Leo XIII published *Libertas praestantissimum*, which sought to answer contemporary questions about liberalism and which served as a source for Saint Josemaría in his preaching and writing, but it would not be until Vatican Council II that a fuller vision of the layperson's freedom and responsibility in public and social life would be endorsed.

During the 19th and 20th centuries there was a current of thought that was suspicious of human freedom, that held that to support personal freedom would endanger the faith. Many people were accustomed to value freedom only insofar as it was necessary to the Christian practice of obedience. In accordance with voluntarism, they held that we were only free so that we could obey, a very restrictive view. This is not to say that **obedience** was not being practised freely, but that historical developments had led to

¹¹¹ Saint Josemaría, *Letter*, 30.4.1946, no. 3. By the time we arrive at the historical-cultural environment of Saint Josemaría (early 20th century Spain), the distinction between Augustine's two concepts '*liberum arbitrium*' (the ability to choose) and '*libertas*' (freedom) had been lost.

¹¹² Saint Josemaría, *Christ is Passing By*, no. 184.

¹¹³ Writing at a time before Vatican II. Vatican II no new dogmas, was a way of bringing the Church's patrimony to the people of the time in a fresh way. Lots of insights, like the vocation of the laity, the importance of religious freedom, etc acquired extra clarity and highlighted in a new way. At our father's time this was not on anyone's radar. Reformation had meant that there was a need to emphasise some things that had been challenged by Protestantism – eg, church hierarchy, authority, obedience to church teaching. Etc. as Protestantism rejected the ministerial priesthood, the church hierarchy, most of the sacraments, the religious vocation, the church's teaching office, the Magisterium, and Tradition, in favour of people being personally and directly guided by the Holy Spirit and their own lights. This took up lots of attention so the role of the laity as an integral part of the church was lost sign of a bit and people saw the hierarchy as the church. Obedience was so important for fidelity that there was a lack of examination of freedom. Then also modernism, socialism, etc. which were also very much about rejecting authority.¹¹³ Also politics where people tended to identify the church with particular political systems or organisations. (eg monarchy/democracy, etc) led to identify church with social repression, etc or lack of political or civil freedoms.

an emphasis on the importance of obedience that overshadowed the gift of freedom itself. Apart from the same consequences of voluntarism for Christian life, the over-emphasis on obedience also led to a loss of initiative and responsibility in social and political affairs, in favour of passivity.

The novelty of Saint Josemaría's teaching lies in the fact that after centuries of spiritualities which gave priority to obedience over freedom, Escriva inverted the order and made obedience an attitude or consequence of freedom.¹¹⁴ Obedience is the fruit of freedom.¹¹⁵ Obedience is a moral virtue, while freedom is constitutive of the corporeo-spiritual person. There is no necessary opposition between the two but there is definitely an order; human nature is the basis for virtuous action. Other spiritual approaches were not wrong or inauthentic, because in the final analysis what is being discussed is 'Christian' obedience, which is always and essentially an obedience out of love for God. If obedience is Christian it must be free, because true love cannot be commanded but only freely given.

Nevertheless, the practice of Christian **obedience** can be understood from two different perspectives:

- c) teaching individuals to subject themselves freely, or
- d) teaching individuals how to employ all the potential of their freedom when they obey.

The difference may seem subtle but it affects the spiritual life to its very depths. The first perspective is about the individual's will which submits to a command or not. The second perspective involves the whole person, body and soul, reason and will, tendencies and passions, in the practice of obedience.

For Saint Josemaría, it was not enough to simply be capable of self-direction, although this is clearly a *sine qua non* for virtuous obedience. On many occasions, he reminded his children that "God does not impose a blind obedience on us. He wants us to obey intelligently".¹¹⁶ Not only the will but the mind ought to be engaged: "listen carefully so that you may understand the extent and the spirit of what is being pointed out to you; and if you do not understand something, ask."¹¹⁷ He clearly taught that it is the whole person who obeys; "We obey with our lips, our heart and our mind."¹¹⁸

He was also convinced that Christian obedience is voluntary and responsible.¹¹⁹ This means "responding" with all of one's being, the whole person. "the children of God are not made of stone. Nor are they corpses. They are intelligent and free beings. And they all have been raised to the same supernatural order".¹²⁰

When we obey, we are never just human beings, but 'children of God', and there is a supernatural dimension to our obedience that surpasses that expected in an ordinary

¹¹⁴ Leonardo Polo xx

¹¹⁵ E. Burkhardt, J. López, *Vida cotidiana y santidad en la enseñanzas de San Josemaría*, vol. 2, 171 (footnote 44)

¹¹⁶ Saint Josemaría, *Christ is Passing By*, no. 17.

¹¹⁷ Saint Josemaría, *Furrow*, no. 380.

¹¹⁸ Saint Josemaría, *Furrow*, no. 374.

¹¹⁹ Saint Josemaría, *Conversations*, no. 2.

¹²⁰ Saint Josemaría, *Conversations*, no. 2.

human organisation. By Baptism we are made children of God, and therefore equal. This equality does not do away with the need for organisations or hierarchies, but it does mean that all of God's children, whether commanding or obeying, should live deeply aware of their divine filiation. Indeed, it is only because one knows oneself to be a beloved child of God that one can lovingly obey the Divine Will: "I would like to engrave this deep in your hearts, that freedom and self-surrender are not contradictory. They sustain one another. Freedom can only be given up for love; I cannot conceive any other reason for surrendering it."¹²¹ As the Catechism of the Catholic Church puts it:

Living a moral life that is animated by charity, or love, 'gives to the Christian the spiritual freedom of the children of God. He no longer stands before God as a slave, in servile fear, or as a mercenary looking for wages, but as a son responding to the love of him who "first loved us" (CCC,1828).¹²²

Looking at St Josemaría's teaching on freedom in his social and historical context, what stands out is his emphasis on free, personal, wholehearted obedience to God's loving will, and its corollary, personal responsibility.

Key Notions in Saint Josemaría's Understanding of Freedom

Freedom is a Gift from God

Saint Josemaría's teaching takes into account the anthropological, philosophical, and socio-political dimensions of human freedom, but is primarily theological. Freedom is a gift from God to men, a gift which finds its meaning and purpose in Him alone.

All creatures have been created out of nothing by God and for God ... it is only we men (I am not referring now to the angels) who can unite ourselves to the Creator by using our freedom. We are in a position to give him, or deny him, the glory that is his due as the Author of everything that exists. This possibility makes up the light and shade of human freedom. Our Lord invites us, urges us to choose the good, so tenderly does he love us! 'See, today I set before you a choice between life and death, good and evil.'¹²³

There are three important aspects to note here which will serve as an overview for this section.

- 1.1. Firstly, God the Creator, in creating human beings, has given us the **gift** of self-mastery; we are able to choose our actions.

¹²¹ Saint Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 31.

¹²² 'If we turn away from evil out of fear of punishment, we are in the position of slaves. If we pursue the enticement of wages, . . . we resemble mercenaries. Finally if we obey for the sake of the good itself and out of love for him who commands . . . we are in the position of children', St. Basil, *Reg. fus. tract., prol.* 3 PG 31, 896 B.

¹²³ Saint Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 24.

- 1.2. Secondly, in life, **choices** can be made, for good or evil, the ‘good’ being that which gives glory to God and allows us to love Him by accomplishing his will.
- 1.3. Thirdly, there is an implicit acknowledgement that human freedom has been negatively affected by **sin**; mankind has not always chosen life and goodness. After original sin we find it difficult to use our freedom for the good, and we discover within ourselves an inclination to evil, a “slavery to sin.”¹²⁴ To free us from this situation, God showed mankind *The Way* to life and goodness through the revelation of the law. Then, in the fullness of time,¹²⁵ He sent his only Son whose Life, Death and Resurrection merited for us the gift of the Holy Spirit, in other words, divine filiation. We are now able to live with the glorious freedom of the children of God.

This theological framework is the basis for Saint Josemaría’s positive view of human freedom. He had confidence in man’s ability to conquer evil with goodness because divine grace has healed and elevated human freedom.

For Saint Josemaría, God’s creation of humankind is understood as a ‘free overflowing of Love’ whereby the human person is not only constituted in love but is also created with an ability to love. We receive from our Creator “the splendid gift of freedom which gives us power over our own actions.”¹²⁶

Without freedom, it is impossible to love. Saint Josemaría makes this point in discussing the Latin verb *diligere* (to love), which is used in the New Testament.¹²⁷ *Diligere* is derived from *eligere* (to choose). To be able to love requires the ability to choose. It requires a firm determination of the rational will,¹²⁸ not blind instinct or mere sentiment. In this connection between *diligere* and *eligere*, between loving and choosing, freedom can be described as the capacity to autonomously choose that which permits one to love like God. By virtue of our capacity for obedience, we can allow our freedom to be transformed by grace so that it participates in the intimate life of God which is Love.

The freedom of a child of God is above that of ordinary human freedom because when one knows that one is God’s child, one can act in accordance with this ‘good news’, and choose the good which is offered by one’s Father.¹²⁹ According to St Josemaría, no one is freer than one who know him or herself to be God’s child:

How great a truth is this, which opens *The Way* to freedom and gives it meaning throughout our lives... the knowledge that we have come from the hands of God, that the Blessed Trinity looks upon us with predilection, that we are children of so wonderful a Father. ... Do not *Forget*: anyone who does not realise that he is a child of God is unaware of the deepest truth about himself.

¹²⁴ Rom 6:17

¹²⁵ Gal 4:4-7

¹²⁶ Saint Josemaría, *Christ is Passing By*, no. 99.

¹²⁷ *Agape* is the highest type of love, referring to benevolence and friendship.

¹²⁸ Saint Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 231.

¹²⁹ Although all human beings are children of God, the term is used in this context to refer to those who have personal awareness of this reality and have responded to it by becoming Christian, sons of God in the Only Son.

When he acts he lacks the dominion and self-mastery we find in those who love Our Lord above all else.¹³⁰

What about the freedom of people who are not aware of their divine filiation? Evidently, they are still free, possessing that liberty that comes from having a spiritual soul, whether they realise it or not. In fact, the Christian freedom Saint Josemaría describes, presupposes this natural level of freedom that comes with being human. However, just as individuals are free because they are persons (not persons because they are free), one possesses Christian freedom because one is a child of God. It is important that we understand the order of concepts correctly. Ability proceeds from nature, not the other way around. What makes a man or woman to be a child of God is the gift of supernatural filiation. The Christian is engendered by the Father in the Son, through the power of the Holy Spirit. Christian freedom is the gift that is given simultaneously with this supernatural adoption so that we may act in accordance with the dignity of our new nature, so we can grow as authentic Christians.

Christian freedom elevates natural human freedom to the supernatural level, but it does not make it absolute or supreme, because it is given to a finite, limited creature who has an ultimate purpose conferred by God, not the self; the perfection of the person, of others and the world. In other words, it is freedom *for* the good, the content of which we do not determine *a priori* but which is God himself. God's freedom is the foundation of our own because whilst we do not create ourselves ontologically, morally we do. The gift of self-determination means that humans can make choices which align with this ultimate end.

On the surface, the fact that our human nature is oriented towards God as the final end may seem to be the exact opposite of freedom but this is an error. Any 'ideal' of undetermined or absolute freedom masks nothing more than the desire to be God and not a human. "In choosing one thing, many other options are excluded. This does not signify a lack of liberty; it is a necessary consequence of our finite nature."¹³¹ Furthermore, humans are relational beings. If 'no man is an island,' freedom too is necessarily relational; it is the ability to open oneself to other beings, to be able to accept the gift of the other and to give oneself. In short, freedom is so that we can receive and give love, be both beloved and lover. The task of the individual is to configure his or her own life as a relational being, capable of assuming his or her creaturely condition and end.

This is only possible when one lives consciously as a beloved child of God, not when one views God as an indifferent "prime mover," clockmaker or even enemy¹³². It does not make sense to see God as an enemy of one's freedom given that he its origin and support. In fact, freedom only makes sense when we choose God, loving him by accomplishing his own loving will. The person who can choose God in each moment, 'in some way, possesses all things in Him.'¹³³ Such a child of God can hear the truth reverberating in the words of the Father to his eldest son in the parable: "my son, all I

¹³⁰ Saint Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 26.

¹³¹ Notes taken from preaching 25-VI- 1972 (AGP, P01, VII-1972, p. 9).

¹³² The Aristotelian, Deist and Nietzschean perspectives on God respectively.

¹³³ E. Burkhardt, J. López, *Vida cotidiana y santidad en la enseñanzas de San Josemaría*, vol. 2, 185.

have is yours.” In Christ, we find the fullness of the deity, so to have him is to have God.¹³⁴

Nevertheless, Saint Josemaría wrote that to get to this supernatural end, we need to be free, and to feel personally free, ‘to help its members know and practise the Christian Faith so they can make it a reality in their lives, with full individual autonomy.’¹³⁵ It is not enough to know theoretically that one is free; it is a reality that needs to be experienced and savoured. Yet this experience of freedom is only truly possible for one who has tasted ‘the goodness of the Lord,’ one whose core self-concept or identity is God’s beloved child. Thus one acts with the spirit of a son and not a slave, truly wanting and desiring that which God wants because it can only be good. For the child of God, the modern notion of “freedom from God” is nonsensical because it would be tantamount to “freedom from oneself.” To truly become oneself, to become free, the person needs to discover God’s will and actualise it in one’s own life because this is the path to a greater freedom and happiness.

Free to Choose: The adventure of freedom

The phrase ‘to fulfil the will of God’ can easily be misinterpreted as an injunction to simply “discover God’s predetermined plan for you and just do it.” One of the chief philosophical/theological conundrums has been the question of how human freedom can be compatible with the existence of a good, all-knowing and all-powerful God. Our human experience tells us that we are really and truly free, that we do decide how we will face reality and even reshape it, moulding it according to our desires.¹³⁶

Saint Josemaría wrote, “I like to speak of the adventure of freedom, because that is how your lives and mine unfold.”¹³⁷ The word ‘adventure’ may call to mind an Indiana Jones type figure, a hero who unravels obscure clues and bravely defeats evil to reach the end of a noble quest. But this is a far cry from the daily reality lived by those to whom Saint Josemaría addressed these words. In the words of his prayer card, the adventure of freedom is to be had in the ordinary ‘circumstances and events of my life’.

In the book of Genesis, the second account of creation¹³⁸ reveals the confidence God has in man, demonstrated by his entrusting man with the prolongation of his loving, creative will in time and space. Man, made in God’s image, is to form a family and share his life (procreation and social life) and work (maintain life and glorify God’s goodness through his creativity). This is the purpose or end of freedom but there is ample space for discerning and deciding concretely about how to best ‘trade with one’s

¹³⁴ Cf. 1 Cor 3:22-23.

¹³⁵ Saint Josemaría, *Conversations*, no.53.

¹³⁶ Also, our freedom itself seems to argue that it would not be worthy of our nature to equate God’s will with a pre-planned outcome for all the minutiae that makes up even just a minute of our lives. In the long succession of decisions and experiences which make up our lives, in that causative trajectory of means within ends and ends within means, it seems utterly wrong to suggest that God has each and every personal decision pre-programmed.

¹³⁷ Saint Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 35.

¹³⁸ Gen 2:15

talents.¹³⁹ The pathway and destination are illuminated but how one chooses to travel is often quite open. Saint Josemaría wrote of this, 'you can travel this path along the right or left, moving forward in a zig-zag, going by foot or on horseback. There are a hundred thousand ways of travelling along this divine path.'¹⁴⁰

To personally assume the purpose of our freedom, to put all of one's energies into achieving it, walking towards heaven in the footsteps of Christ, is truly a great adventure: "It is worthwhile putting our lives on the line, giving ourselves completely, so as to answer to the love and the confidence that God has placed in us."¹⁴¹

God takes the 'risk' of our freedom

At times, when we see the great evil to which man can descend, we are tempted to question whether human freedom is really all that worthwhile. Saint Josemaría was well aware of the reality of evil, but response in favour of human freedom is clear: God "takes a risk with our freedom."¹⁴² and the very fact that he is ready to do so demonstrates something of God's astounding love for man and the confidence that he has in him. St Josemaría wrote, "Christian optimism is not something sugary, nor is it a human optimism that things will "work out well." No, its deep roots are awareness of freedom and faith in grace."¹⁴³

Freedom to love

Love and do what you will.¹⁴⁴

Freedom is not simply the choice of the means, but of the end: we can love or reject God, give him glory or glorify ourselves. Every free act is not simply to choose one thing or another, it is implicitly a choice for God -Supreme Good- or a rejection. Even in original sin, Adam and Eve were not simply making a poor choice about fruit, but were mistrusting God and placing their own will above His.¹⁴⁵

"God created man in the beginning and he left him in the power of his own free will" (Sir 15:14). This could not be so unless man had freedom of choice. We are answerable to God for all the actions we freely perform. There is no room here for anonymity. Each one finds himself face to face with his Lord, and he can decide to live as God's friend or as his enemy.¹⁴⁶

Our model is Jesus Christ, who gave his life to fulfil the will of the Father.

God wanted to "take a risk with our freedom",¹⁴⁷ the risk of us preferring the creature rather than the Creator. He "does not want the forced service of slaves; he prefers to

¹³⁹ Lk 19:11-27.

¹⁴⁰ Saint Josemaría, *Letter*, 2.2.1945, no. 45.

¹⁴¹ Saint Josemaría, *Christ is Passing By*, no. 129.

¹⁴² Saint Josemaría, *Christ is Passing By*, no. 113.

¹⁴³ Saint Josemaría, *Christ is Passing By*, no. 114.

¹⁴⁴ Saint Augustine, *In Epist. Ioan. ad Parthos*, VII, 8.

¹⁴⁵ i.e. Adam and Eve were not mistaken simply about an earthly good, but they placed their will above God's.

¹⁴⁶ Saint Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 36.

¹⁴⁷ Saint Josemaría, *Christ is Passing By*, no. 113.

have children who are free."¹⁴⁸ The possibility of deviating reveals an astonishing aspect of God's love: his trust in every person. That is the authenticity of God's love.

Our example in the exercise of freedom is Jesus Christ, because he is true Man and He was incarnate, He came to do the Will of the Father. Therefore, "He gives himself up to death with the full freedom of Love."¹⁴⁹ The light of Calvary's sacrifice illuminates the meaning of human freedom because man has received it to love God, as Jesus Christ did, and to act in union with Jesus Christ.

For St Josemaría there was no opposition between freedom and surrender, which he considered obedience, "because self-surrender is a consequence of freedom".¹⁵⁰ Self-giving is the most appropriate act of freedom. To him, the life of the Virgin Mary exemplified freedom, "the fruit of the best freedom of all, the freedom of deciding in favour of God."¹⁵¹ He also drew inspiration from St Joseph:

Joseph's faith is active, that his docility is not a passive submission to the course of events. For the Christian's faith has nothing whatever to do with conformity, inertia or lack of initiative. Joseph entrusted himself unreservedly to the care of God, but he always reflected on events ... In the different circumstances of his life, St Joseph never refuses to think, never neglects his responsibilities. On the contrary, he puts his human experience at the service of faith. When he returns from Egypt, "learning that Archelaus had succeeded his father Herod as ruler of Judea, he was afraid to go there (Mt 2:22). In other words, he had learned to work within the divine plan. And to confirm that he was doing the right thing, Joseph received an instruction to return to Galilee."¹⁵²

Freedom and inclination to evil

The inclination to evil that we all have as a consequence of original sin, has not destroyed the original tendency towards good. When we choose evil we seek something we perceive to be good in some way, as all our decisions are made seeking an object we consider good for some reason, even if we are mistaken or getting our priorities wrong. St Josemaría teaches that, according to traditional doctrine, we should not exaggerate the inclination to evil. There is the possibility of using freedom wrongly, but also of corresponding to God's love, which takes an effort. A Christian who lets his or her inclination to evil dominate, "stops being a son and becomes a slave"¹⁵³

I accept no slavery other than that of God's Love. This is because ... religion is the greatest rebellion of men, who refuse to live like animals, who are dissatisfied and restless until they know their Creator and are on intimate terms with him. I want you to be rebels, free and unfettered, because I want you - it is Christ who wants us! - to be children of God. Slavery or divine sonship, this is

¹⁴⁸ Saint Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 33.

¹⁴⁹ Saint Josemaría, *The Way of the Cross*, Tenth Station.

¹⁵⁰ Saint Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 30-31.

¹⁵¹ Saint Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 25.

¹⁵² Saint Josemaría, *Christ is Passing By*, no. 42.

¹⁵³ Saint Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 34.

the dilemma we face. Children of God or slaves to pride, to sensuality, to the fretful selfishness which seems to afflict so many souls."¹⁵⁴

Next to the bondage of sin, there is another bondage: the slavery of the law in the doctrine of St Paul. It regards the fulfilment of the ritual precepts of the Old Law as necessary for salvation. Saint Josemaría applies Saint Paul's teachings to the present day: the temptation to reduce Christian life to the observance of practices, to the observance of rules. God wants "the outer works to be a reflection of a spirit and not the fruit of coercion"¹⁵⁵.

"To be just is not simply a matter of obeying rules. Goodness should grow from the inside; it should be deep and vital — for "the just man lives by faith" (Hab 2:4).¹⁵⁶

There is also the deformation of those who are afraid to be freedom. They prefer to be given ready-made formulas for everything: it is a paradox, but people often demand them, 'giving up freedom for fear of taking risks'¹⁵⁷. The preaching of St Josemaría challenges this attitude: It is not a question of skipping the rules, but of seeing in them an expression of the will of the living God. Therefore, obedience to the law (natural, divine, which is summed up in love) comes from within, and is prepared to obey God when his will is manifested in surprising and unexpected ways.¹⁵⁸

There are infinite ways to walk the way of God, within lawful temporal realities. The novelty of Christ's law is that it is done out of love. The disciple of Christ should not expect to be micro-managed. This is the meaning of St. Augustine's "*Love and do what you will.*"¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁴ Saint Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 38.

¹⁵⁵ Saint Josemaría, *Letter*, 6.6.1945, no. 39.

¹⁵⁶ Saint Josemaría, *Christ is Passing By*, no. 41.

¹⁵⁷ Saint Josemaría, *Letter*, 9.1.1959, no. 59.

¹⁵⁸ Consider Saint Joseph.

¹⁵⁹ Saint Augustine, *In Epist. Ioan. ad Parthos*, VII, 8.

Grace and freedom

Christian faith ... makes us admire the splendid gift of freedom which gives us power over our own actions and enables us - with heaven's grace - to build our eternal destiny.¹⁶⁰

There is no such thing as freedom pure and simple, just as there is no such thing as pure nature: there is either nature with grace or nature with sin; there is either the freedom of God's children or interior slavery to one's own wretchedness.¹⁶¹

Freedom is central to the Christian idea of the world. From the moment of their creation, humans lived before God as capable and responsible beings able to exercise dominion and to direct themselves freely to God and adore Him. Freedom, as we have said, is a gift from God. Living as a free human being is not a part or an aspect of life but belongs to the entire human being.

Our end and vocation is supernatural and so, the Church has always taught, we cannot save ourselves or reach heaven or flourish as children of God we are, without the life of grace. Our free acts alone cannot justify us. It is when our freedom acts with the help of grace that our acts take on a supernatural value.

Luther was correct when he recognised that we are not saved by our works or human efforts. We are justified by grace.¹⁶² At the same time, faith without works is dead.¹⁶³

Justification

is the merciful and freely-given act of God which takes away our sins and makes us just and holy in our whole being. It is brought about by means of the grace of the Holy Spirit which has been merited for us by the passion of Christ and is given to us in Baptism. Justification is the beginning of the free response of man, that is, faith in Christ and of cooperation with the grace of the Holy Spirit (CCCC, 422).

St Josemaría emphasised the Church's teaching on the priority of grace in the spiritual life in his teachings on divine filiation.

'Grace is the help God gives us to respond to our vocation of becoming his adopted sons. ... Grace responds to the deepest yearnings of human freedom, calls freedom to cooperate with it, and perfects freedom.'¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁰ Saint Josemaría, *Christ is Passing By*, no. 99.

¹⁶¹ F. Ocariz, *God as Father*, (Princeton, New Jersey, Scepter: 1998).

¹⁶² Although faith without works is dead. We cannot therefore rely on our feelings or our works to conclude that we are justified and saved. However, according to the Lord's words "Thus you will know them by their fruits" reflection on God's blessings in our life and in the lives of the saints offers us a guarantee that grace is at work in us and spurs us on to an ever greater faith and an attitude of trustful poverty (CCC, 2005).

¹⁶³ James 2:14-26

¹⁶⁴ CCC, 2021-2022.

St Josemaría taught that, as children of God we cooperate with grace, not relying on human strength, nor sitting back and relying on grace to save us.¹⁶⁵

People have often drawn attention to the danger of deeds performed without any interior life to inspire them; but we should also stress the danger of an interior life — if such a thing is possible — without deeds¹⁶⁶

I feel moved, and more so each day, to shout out, 'Lord, do not depart from me, for without you I can do no good at all.' Precisely because of this, I readily understand those words of St Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, which ring out like a wonderful hymn to freedom, 'God who created you without you, will not save you without you'.¹⁶⁷

We have need and assistance of grace in two ways,

Sanctifying grace to make us free. The state of freedom is the state of self-mastery... this is where sanctifying grace comes in.

Actual grace to help us use our freedom well in day to day life.

GS 17 incorporates grace and freedom in both.

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. Man achieves such dignity when, emancipating himself from all captivity to passion, he pursues his goal in a spontaneous choice of what is good, and procures for himself through effective and skilful action, apt helps to that end.¹⁶⁸

The two aspects are interdependent. How you exercise your freedom (with the help of God) puts you in the state of freedom (which is also a gift of God). And vice versa, being in the state of freedom deeply affects the way we use our freedom. Sanctifying grace bring the state of freedom, actual graces help the positive use of freedom. Both sanctifying grace and actual grace play a role in freedom, but in different ways.

¹⁶⁵ Burkhart & López, *Santidad y vida cotidiana en la enseñanza de san Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer*, 203.

Also see Francis, *Gaudete et Exsultate*, Chapter 2 (on modern Gnosticism and Pelagianism) & CCC, 406.

¹⁶⁶ Saint Josemaría, *Forge*, no. 734.

¹⁶⁷ Saint Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 23.

¹⁶⁸ GS, 17.

Sanctifying grace and Freedom

Libertas – self-mastery/dominion freedom from external coercion or sin or slavery of disordered passions.

We are freer without the guilt of sin and have more mastery over our passions. We are less free if separated from God by sin or confused by the passions.¹⁶⁹

Baptism – pass from state of sin to state of friendship with God. Original sin – cuts us off from supernatural life and our vocation. Can't merit, etc or get where we want to go without life of sanctifying grace. Nature elevated by grace is a new nature, a new state of freedom, that of the freedom for the children of God.

Christ freed us. Freeing, as we say opens the gates, or in analogy St Paul used in the Old Testament, ransomed us from slavery. (where people were sold into slavery, ransomed back). (1Cor 6:20; 7:23). Paid for us with his Blood. And won for us the gift of the Holy Spirit who heals and elevates our nature with sanctifying grace so that we not a servant but son (Gal 4:7).

Why did he save us? To call us friends (Jn 15:17). He freed us so we could be friends of God, that we could know and love him in a way fitting to our dignity as adopted children. He freed us so we can love.

As said above, human nature was wounded by original sin, subject to ignorance, suffering, death, and inclined to sin. 'It is wounded in the natural powers proper to it, subject to ignorance, suffering and the dominion of death, and inclined to sin' (CCC, 405). This wounded nature transmitted to us continues. With sanctifying grace, God elevates our intellect, will and sense faculties through charity, the other supernatural virtues and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. They are healed from the inclination to evil in the will and the obscurity of the reason and the disorder of the passions. So from this we are able to act more freely. So we can say that the holier a person is, the freer they are.

Other consequences of sin are the power of the devil (temptations) and suffering and death. Christ's conquering of these will be seen definitively at the end of time when the devil's power over the children of God will be destroyed (Ap 12: 9-10). The Lord will wipe away tears, etc. (Ap 21:4, 1 Cor 15:26).

Sanctifying grace

is the gratuitous gift that God gives us to make us participants in his trinitarian life and able to act by his love. It ... sanctifies and divinizes us. It ... depends entirely on God's gratuitous initiative and surpasses the abilities of the intellect and the powers of human beings. It therefore escapes our experience (CCCC, 423).¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁹ Jn 8:31-36; Rom 6: 12, 17-18; Gal 4:1; Gal 5:1, 21-31, Gal 6:2.

¹⁷⁰ 'Sanctifying grace is an habitual gift, a stable and supernatural disposition that perfects the soul itself to enable it to live with God, to act by his love. Habitual grace, the permanent disposition to live and act in keeping with God's call.' CCC, 2000.

The state of freedom is that which enables a person to make decisions with more or less self-mastery. At the human level, this is when we are free from external coercion or oppression. As the supernatural level, the state of freedom is freedom from sin and the disordered passions.

It is through sanctifying grace that we move from the state of sin to that of friendship with God.¹⁷¹

Grace does not change the essence of the free act (our freedom of choice), but it does make us freer because it frees us from sin and allows supernatural actions to be carried out as befits a child of God. "That is why we must go to Jesus, so that he will make us truly free."¹⁷²

The deliverance gained by Christ is so that we may become friends of God: 'I no longer call you servants, but friends' (Jn 15:15). This liberation elevates the powers of the soul through charity, the other supernatural virtues and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The holier we are, the freer we become. And it also frees us from some consequences of sin such as the power of Satan, pain and death.

Although this liberation will be fully manifested at the end of history, we are freed from:

- the power of the devil (because we can more easily reject temptations and use them to grow in God's love);
- pain (in the sense that, by having a meaning, we lose our fear of suffering or know that we can turn pain into something fruitful);
- death (in the same sense as above: we are freed from the fear of death because we know that it is a step towards eternal life).

In summary, this situation of freedom of the children of God is an anticipation of the full freedom of glory. But in this world our liberation is still not definitive.

We Christians carry the great treasures of grace in vessels of clay. God has entrusted his gifts to the weakness and fragility of human freedom. We can be certain of the help of God's power, but our lust, our love of comfort and our pride sometimes cause us to reject his grace and to fall into sin."¹⁷³

We are answerable to God for all the actions we freely perform. There is no room here for anonymity. Each one finds himself face to face with his Lord, and he can decide to live as God's friend or as his enemy. This is the beginning of the path of the interior struggle which is a lifelong undertaking because, as long as we are on this earth, we will never achieve complete freedom.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷¹ GS, 17.

¹⁷² Saint Josemaría, *Christ is Passing By*, no. 17.

¹⁷³ Saint Josemaría, *Christ is Passing By*, no. 131.

¹⁷⁴ Saint Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 36.

Actual Grace and free decisions

Free choice (*liberum arbitrium*) is to be able to direct oneself to the good, to want or not want something (reflecting self-determination). It is 'freedom for'.¹⁷⁵

We rely on God for our elevation to the supernatural order. We don't only need sanctifying grace that divinises our nature to carry out actions with supernatural reach, but we also need actual graces to move us to carry out these actions of the children of God (1 Cor 12:3)

St Josemaría expresses traditional doctrine on actual grace when he says that they consist of 'a thousand motions of our will, in the clear insights of our minds, in the affections of our heart'.¹⁷⁶ He offers an example:

It is as if he were saying to us: "Fight continuously in the apparently unimportant things which are to my mind important; fulfil your duty punctually; smile at whoever needs cheering up, even though there is sorrow in your soul; devote the necessary time to prayer, without haggling; go to the help of anyone who looks for you; practice justice and go beyond it with the grace of charity. These and many others are the inspirations we feel inside us every day."¹⁷⁷

Even though nature elevated by grace is the beginning of supernatural actions, the Christian needs these divine impulses to move him, because sanctifying grace, being a totally supernatural gift, not necessary for human nature, the determination to act does not come in the first instance from personal initiative but from God via actual grace that a Christian can act on freely.¹⁷⁸

The primacy of grace is absolute, not only in the sense that the action of God founds the action of man, but also in the sense that our acts, in the order of sanctification, are also the fruit of grace. The greatness of a Christian is found in cooperating with what God wants to bring about in us. So, in the task of sanctification, we always need to ask, as a poor child, for the grace of Christ who said: 'without me you can do nothing'. (Jn 15:5).

We even need the Holy Spirit to move us to ask in this way (cf. Rom 8: 26). And so St Josemaría said:

Seek God's help always and in everything. Be sure that, without Him, no worthwhile task can be undertaken. Seek always his mercy and pray like this: *dirigat corda nostra, quaesumus Domine, tuae miserationis operatio, quia tibi sine te placere non possumus*: We need God to govern us, because we cannot please him or serve him with joy, if He doesn't help us. We must count on Him

¹⁷⁵ Dt 30: 15, 19-20. Sir 15: 14-17.

¹⁷⁶ Saint Josemaría, *Christ is Passing By*, no. 13. Actual graces 'refer to God's interventions, whether at the beginning of conversion or in the course of the work of sanctification'. CCC, 2000. They are not a 'habitual' grace, like sanctifying grace, a permanent quality. They are actual motions of the Holy Spirit so we can know, love or carry out something. *S. Th.* I-II, q. 110, a. 2, c.

¹⁷⁷ Saint Josemaría, *Christ is Passing By*, no. 77.

¹⁷⁸ 'The divine initiative in the work of grace precedes, prepares, and elicits the free response of man. Grace responds to the deepest yearnings of human freedom, calls freedom to cooperate with it, and perfects freedom'. CCC, 2022.

for everything, opening our hearts, so that in a supernatural and fatherly way we may be led through paths of interior life and apostolate.¹⁷⁹

For all of this we cannot forget that God always takes human freedom into account. This applies to moving from the state of sin to the state of grace, and to growth in holiness. St Augustine teaches that God acts in us, but with the gentleness of love, completely respecting our freedom.¹⁸⁰ Grace requires our cooperation.¹⁸¹

“Grace, like nature, normally acts gradually. We cannot, properly speaking, move ahead of grace. But in all that does depend on us we have to prepare the way and co-operate when God grants grace to us.”¹⁸²

Our Lord compares the growth of the Kingdom with the growth of a seed. It develops on its own. “and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he knows not how” (Mk 4:27). The parable shows the primacy of grace in sanctification. But this doesn’t mean that we don’t have to do anything. Jesus also talks about the seed that falls on the path, or among the stones, or among the thorns or in good soil: some bear fruit, others do not, and not all give the same fruit. So, the fruits also depend on human cooperation (cf. Mk 4: 9-20). Similarly, the parable of the talents shows the need to cooperate with grace.¹⁸³

The positive exercise of freedom of a child of God consists then, in welcoming sanctifying grace and cooperating with actual graces. – letting oneself be led with docility by the Holy Spirit. As an example of the exercise of freedom, St Josemaría contemplates the response of Our Lady to the Archangel Gabriel. From the beginning she was full of grace (Lk 1:28), and in the moment of the Annunciation, she received actual graces. The archangel lets her know how the Incarnation was to occur and she gives her answer: “And Mary said, ‘Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.’ And the angel departed from her.” (Lk 1:38). In this moment she shows her freedom. Her decision is, yes, an effect of grace, but also free. She acknowledges herself to be a ‘handmaid’, because everything that has been done is God’s initiative; and then she says the ‘be it done unto me’ so that it can be accomplished through her. Freedom is exercised by welcoming, with God’s help, what God Himself will do.¹⁸⁴

¹⁷⁹ Saint Josemaría, *Letter*, 14.2.1974, no. 22.

¹⁸⁰ Augustine, *De correptione et gratia*, 12, 38; *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, 13.

¹⁸¹ CCC, no. 2022.

¹⁸² Saint Josemaría, *Furrow*, no. 668.

¹⁸³ See Mt 25:14-28; Lk 19: 11-27. Again, here, recall the Church’s teaching against Pelagianism that does away with grace and relies on human effort alone to reach salvation, like the Lutheran position according to which man cannot do anything for his salvation except trust in God. (cf. CCC, 406 ‘The Church’s teaching on the transmission of original sin was articulated more precisely in the fifth century, especially under the impulse of St. Augustine’s reflections against Pelagianism, and in the sixteenth century, in opposition to the Protestant Reformation. Pelagius held that man could, by the natural power of free will and without the necessary help of God’s grace, lead a morally good life; he thus reduced the influence of Adam’s fault to bad example. The first Protestant reformers, on the contrary, taught that original sin has radically perverted man and destroyed his freedom; they identified the sin inherited by each man with the tendency to evil (*concupiscentia*), which would be insurmountable. The Church pronounced on the meaning of the data of Revelation on original sin especially at the second Council of Orange (529) and at the Council of Trent (1546).’

¹⁸⁴ Cf. Saint Josemaría, *Christ is Passing By*, no. 173.

From the exercise of freedom to the state of freedom

When we perform a free act corresponding to actual grace, the Christian merits an increase in sanctifying grace and of the supernatural virtues that lead us to grow in freedom.¹⁸⁵ God made us free so we can love him and freedom grows in the measure to which we grow in love. If, on the other hand, we do evil, we compromise our freedom.

We can still say 'no' to God, rejecting this source of new and permanent happiness. Anyone who does so stops being a son and becomes a slave.¹⁸⁶

In the case of mortal sin, man is left without the life of grace and loses freedom of the children of God that belongs to the state of justification. In this situation she/he is incapable of performing meritorious acts and is morally weaker. All the same, mortal sin does not destroy the freedom one has as a person. One can always convert, corresponding to the actual graces that Divine Mercy offers and attain again the freedom of the children of God.

No concrete action of a Christian is morally indifferent or without significance for the supernatural life. All actions, even material ones like eating and drinking, can be done for love of God and for his glory moved by actual graces (1 Cor 10: 31), or for self-centred motives or vainglory. It is love that sets our freedom in motion. If it is for love of God and love of others for God, the act liberates the Christian. If it is for disordered love, it enslaves in some way; liberty turns in on itself.

'If you are not going forwards on the path to God, you're going backwards' says St Gregory the Great.¹⁸⁷ With every action we grow or diminish as children of God and improve or worsen our state of freedom. There is a Christian freedom when we receive supernatural life in Baptism, and a situation of freedom that we attain by corresponding to actual graces.

When we use the freedom we were born with to love God, we grow in holiness and freedom. We win our freedom through freedom: it grows as it is properly exercised.¹⁸⁸ If we are not free, we cannot love God, and if we don't love God, we can't be free.¹⁸⁹ This is not circular reasoning. To say that we cannot love God if we are not free means that freedom is conquered by corresponding to grace, the freedom of someone who is master of oneself, and who is not a slave to a thing, passions or self.

¹⁸⁵ 'The practice of the moral life animated by charity gives to the Christian the spiritual freedom of the children of God. He no longer stands before God as a slave, in servile fear, or as a mercenary looking for wages, but as a son responding to the love of him who "first loved us"'. CCC, 1828.

¹⁸⁶ Saint Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 37. St Josemaría then cites an explanation from Aquinas: "Each thing is that which it is fitted to be according to its nature; hence, when it goes in search of something alien to its nature, it is not acting according to its own manner of being, but under an alien impulse; and this is to act in a servile manner. Man is rational by nature. When he acts according to reason, he proceeds by his own movement, according to what he is: and this is proper to freedom. When he sins, he works against reason, and then he is allowing himself to be led by the impulse of another, he is subject to limitations imposed by another and so anyone who commits sin is a slave to sin (John 8:34).' *In Ioann. Ev.*, c. 8, lect. 4.

¹⁸⁷ '*In via Dei stare retrocederé est.*' Gregory the Great, *Regul pastoralis*, p. 3, c. 1.

¹⁸⁸ A. Llano, *Libertad y trabajo*, 185, commenting on the teachings of St Josemaría.

¹⁸⁹ A. Millan Puelles, *Amor a la libertad*, 33.

Christian life can be described as a process of liberation in that one progressively receives-conquers freedom. Aquinas wrote that ‘ the more charity one has, the freer one is’.¹⁹⁰ St Josemaría expresses this truth in an expressive way:

From sin to grace and then to growth in holiness: ‘Only when we love do we attain the fullest freedom’.¹⁹¹

When freedom is answered in the affirmative, then charity grows; On the contrary, rejection of grace (saying no) is not a liberation, but a slavery.¹⁹²

When we breathe this air of freedom we see clearly that evil is an enslavement, not a liberation. ‘He who sins against God keeps the freedom of his will to the extent that he is free from coercion, but he has lost it in that he is no longer free from blame.’ Such a person may show that he has acted according to his preferences, but he does not speak with the voice of true freedom, because he has become the slave of his decision and he has decided for the worst, for the absence of God, where there is no freedom to be found.¹⁹³

There is a freedom that is acquired through Baptism and a state of freedom that is conquered through correspondence to grace. Christian life is a process of liberation: “The more charity you have, the more freedom you have”¹⁹⁴ (Saint Thomas Aquinas) and “Only when we love do we attain the fullest freedom: the freedom of not wanting ever to abandon, for all eternity, the object of our love.”¹⁹⁵ In short, this state of freedom of the children of God is certainly a foretaste of the full freedom in the glory of Heaven.

The awareness of the freedom of God's children – freedom & divine filiation

May you be content knowing you are a child of God. Let this presence settle into your bones, and allow your soul the freedom to sing, dance, praise and love. It is there for each and every one of us.¹⁹⁶

If the awareness of one’s divine filiation is the foundation of the spiritual life in the teaching of Saint Josemaría, the sense of freedom is intimately connected to it.

Christian life is, for St Josemaría, continuous freedom. Above all he loved freedom because freedom makes it possible to love God.

¹⁹⁰ ‘*Quanto aliquis plus habet de caritate, plus habet de libertate*’. In *III Sent.* D.29, a.8, q1a. 3, s.c.

¹⁹¹ Saint Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 38.

¹⁹² Letter from the Father, 9 January 2018, no. 2.

¹⁹³ Saint Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 37.

¹⁹⁴ In *III Sent.*, d 29,a. 8, q1a 3, sc

¹⁹⁵ Saint Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 38.

¹⁹⁶ M. L. Haskins, “The Gate of Year”, in “*The Desert*”, 1908. The following is attributed to St Therese of Lisieux: “Today may there be peace within. May you trust God that you are exactly where you are meant to be. May you not forget the infinite possibilities that are born of faith. May you use those gifts that you have received and pass on the love that has been given to you. May you be content knowing you are a child of God Let this presence settle into your bones, and allow your soul the freedom to sing, dance, praise and love. It is here for each and every one of us.”

To persevere in following in the footsteps of Jesus, you always need a continuous freedom, a continuous willingness, a continuous exercise of your own freedom.¹⁹⁷

For him, we "can unite ourselves to the Creator by using our freedom."¹⁹⁸

St Josemaría, when he wrote this, was not just wanting to teach us Christian anthropology, but to transmit the conviction that for the sanctification and apostolate in middle of the world, we need to be and to feel personally free, with the freedom Christ won for us. 'To attain this supernatural end, men need to be and to feel personally free with the freedom that Christ won for us'.¹⁹⁹

It is not enough to be free, but one needs to feel free and aware that we are free. The goal is to instil a deep sense of personal freedom in souls and help them realise it is rooted in their divine filiation. The message is not simply theoretical (or an inert foundation) but it is transformative in everyday life.

Awareness of freedom is the intimate conviction that personal sanctification and apostolate require a continuous exercise of own freedom, corresponding to divine grace.

This is something more than awareness of a fact, it leads to a passionate love for freedom, translated into zeal for defending it and in empowering it in oneself and in others. In this regard, St Josemaría used to speak often about 'love of freedom.'

To be aware of our freedom is a primordial part of the sense of divine filiation. To live in accord with this sense is to exercise that freedom. Certainly what is not living as a child of God is abusing freedom, converting it into an opportunity for evil. But we do not exercise our freedom of being a child of God by not using our freedom, 'burying one's talents' (Mt 25:18). Commenting on the parable of the talents, St Josemaría writes:

Let us not forget this man's sickly fear of putting to honest use his capacity for work, his mind, his will, his whole being. 'I'll bury it,' the poor fellow seems to be saying, 'but my freedom is safe!' Not so. He has turned his freedom towards something very definite, towards the most miserable and arid barrenness. He has taken sides, because he had no alternative. He had to choose, but he has chosen badly.²⁰⁰

The connection between divine filiation and freedom is so deep that, existentially, a Christian not only feels free because they know they are a child of God. The reverse also happens: we experience an awareness of our divine filiation when we feel free.

We Christians perceive with a particular clearness all the wealth of our divine filiation, when we realize that we are fully free because we are doing our

¹⁹⁷ Saint Josemaría, *Forge*, no. 819.

¹⁹⁸ Saint Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 24.

¹⁹⁹ Saint Josemaría, *Conversations*, no. 34.

²⁰⁰ Saint Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 30.

Father's work, when our joy becomes constant because no one can take our hope away.²⁰¹

This awareness of freedom, what manifestations and demands does it have? We could list many, but there are two we can focus on in the preaching of St Josemaria, the sense of responsibility and trust.

Sense of responsibility – freedom and sanctification of daily life

"Personal freedom is essential to the Christian life. But do not forget, my children, that I always speak of a responsible freedom."²⁰²

Since the actions are ours, we can answer for them and we can be asked to account for them. This gives us serenity, it makes us friends of the truth (therefore without fear of rectifying or changing our minds).

Responsibility before God and before men. There are no set paths or solutions to follow; it invites us to use our initiative and respond personally.

Freedom is a gift that allows us to respond to the gift of God with self-giving, because our free actions belong to us. They are ours and we are accountable for them. Freedom makes human beings responsible for their acts, in the first place, in front of God. Freedom for the Founder of Opus Dei, is first of all freedom before God and for God, and so responsibility comes with it. He rarely spoke about freedom without referring to responsibility.

Something to focus on here is not just the concept of responsibility but the 'sense of responsibility' as a manifestation of the awareness of one's own freedom. A person who knows themselves to be free, with Christian freedom, feels responsible for their use of that freedom.

"From freedom a healthy sense of personal responsibility is born that makes us serene, upright, and friends of the truth. At the same time, it separates you from errors: because you sincerely respect the legitimate opinions of others and you know how to not only renounce your opinion when you see that it doesn't correspond to the truth, but also to accept other criteria, without feeling humiliated for having changed your opinion."²⁰³

Responsible freedom is not less free; it is a freedom that is more aware and therefore is, freer.

The idea of a 'sense of responsibility' appears throughout the writings of St Josemaria. We can pick two to focus on. The first is a point from *The Way*, which captures the tone of his preaching from the beginning:

²⁰¹ Saint Josemaría, *Christ is Passing By*, no. 138.

²⁰² Saint Josemaría, *Conversations*, no. 117.

²⁰³ Saint Josemaría, *Letter*, 9 January 1951, no. 25.

Many great things depend — don't forget it — on whether you and I live our lives as God wants.²⁰⁴

The point is in the chapter called 'The will of God'. It doesn't explicitly mention responsibility but evidently refers to it. It is that responsibility to use our freedom for the good, to accomplish God's will. A freedom on which 'great things depend' in reference to sanctification and apostolate includes building a Christian society and the search for the common good. It is responsibility before God and men; the world and history.

The other text is autobiographical.

If my own personal experience is of any help, I can say that I have always seen my work as a priest and shepherd of souls as being aimed at helping each person to face up to all the demands of his life and to discover what God wants from him in particular — without in any way limiting that holy independence and blessed personal responsibility which are the features of a Christian conscience. This way of acting and this spirit are based on respect for the transcendence of revealed truth and on love for the freedom of the human person. I might add that they are also based on a realization that history is undetermined and open to a variety of human options — all of which God respects.²⁰⁵

St Josemaría did not want to hand out convenient, pre-packaged solutions to people who came to him with vital questions. He respected their independence and wanted them to assume responsibility. To work 'for love of freedom' for a freedom with which have to write history open to multiple possibilities, especially in cases of those who seek holiness in temporal activities,

Trust in God and in others

Awareness of our freedom finds expression in our sense of responsibility. It is also part of trust. Trust is a recurring theme in St Josemaría's teaching. Awareness of our freedom gives us a sense of responsibility, but also gives us trust. First, trust in God:

In your heart and soul, in your intelligence and in your will, implant a spirit of trust and abandonment to the loving Will of your heavenly Father... —From this will arise the interior peace you desire.²⁰⁶

Trust fully in God and have a greater desire each day never to run away from him.²⁰⁷

Then trust in others: 'trust is so proper to our spirit', he wrote to his children in *Opus Dei*. Also trust in other people. This especially applies to spiritual direction: Trust is so

²⁰⁴ Saint Josemaría, *The Way*, no. 755.

²⁰⁵ Saint Josemaría, *Christ is Passing By*, no. 99.

²⁰⁶ Saint Josemaría, *Furrow*, no. 850.

²⁰⁷ Saint Josemaría, *Forge*, no. 214.

much part of our way of being, he wrote to his children in Opus Dei. Particularly in spiritual direction.

In the spiritual life we have to let ourselves be led with complete trust, single-mindedly and without fear.²⁰⁸

In these and other texts, even though freedom is not mentioned, it can be seen that trust arises from the awareness of the value of the freedom of the children of God. St Josemaría moves from the sense of divine filiation to awareness of freedom and to trust.

If freedom is separated from its origin and end, and reduced to the power of doing, it leads to a fear of trust, or a mistrust of trust. But when we consider it as a gift from God to be able to give oneself, its value emerges, because it is only by trusting that it is possible to give oneself to God and to others for love of God. Distrust turns freedom in on itself.

Trust in God is not the same as trusting in others: God cannot fail. But trusting God implies trusting in others. For Saint Josemaría we trust others because God trusts them: in the freedom he has given them. The idea of freedom as a gift of God implies trusting others, because we see that the freedom of others is also a gift from God, for them to be allowed, to be encouraged, to act freely. This trust is based on what people are – free persons, - not on how they have used their freedom. If they have use it well there will be all the more reason to trust them; if they have used it unwisely this does not justify a total loss of confidence in them, as that would be denying the positive possibilities of their freedom. With noble realism, St Josemaría invites us to learn:

I will say it again: we have to be prudent, yes; but not suspicious. Give everyone the utmost credit for what he says. Be very noble. As far as I am concerned, the word of a Christian, of a loyal man — I trust every one of you entirely — is worth more than the official signatures of a hundred notaries who are in unanimous agreement, even though on some occasions I may have been deceived by following this rule. But I prefer to leave myself open to the unscrupulous abuse of this confidence, rather than deprive anyone of the credit he deserves as a person and as a son of God. I can assure you that I have never been disappointed by the consequences of this way of acting.²⁰⁹

So, awareness of our freedom as children of God is manifested in sense of responsibility and in trust. If we are aware of its value, we also promote it (see Chapter 4).

²⁰⁸ Saint Josemaría, *Furrow*, no. 145.

²⁰⁹ Saint Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 159.

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Catechism of the Catholic Church

II. Human Freedom in the Economy of Salvation

1739 Freedom and sin. Man's freedom is limited and fallible. In fact, man failed. He freely sinned. By refusing God's plan of love, he deceived himself and became a slave to sin. This first alienation engendered a multitude of others. From its outset, human history attests the wretchedness and oppression born of the human heart in consequence of the abuse of freedom.

1740 Threats to freedom. the exercise of freedom does not imply a right to say or do everything. It is false to maintain that man, "the subject of this freedom," is "an individual who is fully self-sufficient and whose finality is the satisfaction of his own interests in the enjoyment of earthly goods." Moreover, the economic, social, political, and cultural conditions that are needed for a just exercise of freedom are too often disregarded or violated. Such situations of blindness and injustice injure the moral life and involve the strong as well as the weak in the temptation to sin against charity. By deviating from the moral law man violates his own freedom, becomes imprisoned within himself, disrupts neighborly fellowship, and rebels against divine truth.

1741 Liberation and salvation. By his glorious Cross Christ has won salvation for all men. He redeemed them from the sin that held them in bondage. "For freedom Christ has set us free." In him we have communion with the "truth that makes us free." The Holy Spirit has been given to us and, as the Apostle teaches, "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom." Already we glory in the "liberty of the children of God."

1742 Freedom and grace. the grace of Christ is not in the slightest way a rival of our freedom when this freedom accords with the sense of the true and the good that God has put in the human heart. On the contrary, as Christian experience attests especially in prayer, the more docile we are to the promptings of grace, the more we grow in inner freedom and confidence during trials, such as those we face in the pressures and constraints of the outer world. By the working of grace the Holy Spirit educates us in spiritual freedom in order to make us free collaborators in his work in the Church and in the world:

Almighty and merciful God,
in your goodness take away from us all that is harmful,
so that, made ready both in mind and body,
we may freely accomplish your will.

...

GRACE AND JUSTIFICATION

I. Justification

1987 The grace of the Holy Spirit has the power to justify us, that is, to cleanse us from our sins and to communicate to us "the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ" and through Baptism:

But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him. For we know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives

he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves as dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

1988 Through the power of the Holy Spirit we take part in Christ's Passion by dying to sin, and in his Resurrection by being born to a new life; we are members of his Body which is the Church, branches grafted onto the vine which is himself:

(God) gave himself to us through his Spirit. By the participation of the Spirit, we become communicants in the divine nature.... For this reason, those in whom the Spirit dwells are divinized.

1989 The first work of the grace of the Holy Spirit is conversion, effecting justification in accordance with Jesus' proclamation at the beginning of the Gospel: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Moved by grace, man turns toward God and away from sin, thus accepting forgiveness and righteousness from on high. "Justification is not only the remission of sins, but also the sanctification and renewal of the interior man.

1990 Justification detaches man from sin which contradicts the love of God, and purifies his heart of sin. Justification follows upon God's merciful initiative of offering forgiveness. It reconciles man with God. It frees from the enslavement to sin, and it heals.

1991 Justification is at the same time the acceptance of God's righteousness through faith in Jesus Christ. Righteousness (or "justice") here means the rectitude of divine love. With justification, faith, hope, and charity are poured into our hearts, and obedience to the divine will is granted us.

1992 Justification has been merited for us by the Passion of Christ who offered himself on the cross as a living victim, holy and pleasing to God, and whose blood has become the instrument of atonement for the sins of all men. Justification is conferred in Baptism, the sacrament of faith. It conforms us to the righteousness of God, who makes us inwardly just by the power of his mercy. Its purpose is the glory of God and of Christ, and the gift of eternal life:

But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from law, although the law and the prophets bear witness to it, the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, they are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as an expiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins; it was to prove at the present time that he himself is righteous and that he justifies him who has faith in Jesus.

1993 Justification establishes cooperation between God's grace and man's freedom. On man's part it is expressed by the assent of faith to the Word of God, which invites him to conversion, and in the cooperation of charity with the prompting of the Holy Spirit who precedes and preserves his assent:

When God touches man's heart through the illumination of the Holy Spirit, man himself is not inactive while receiving that inspiration, since he could reject it; and yet, without God's grace, he cannot by his own free will move himself toward justice in God's sight.

1994 Justification is the most excellent work of God's love made manifest in Christ Jesus and granted by the Holy Spirit. It is the opinion of St. Augustine that "the justification of the wicked is a greater work than the creation of heaven and earth," because "heaven and earth will pass away but the salvation and justification of the elect . . . will not pass away." He holds also that

the justification of sinners surpasses the creation of the angels in justice, in that it bears witness to a greater mercy.

1995 The Holy Spirit is the master of the interior life. By giving birth to the "inner man," justification entails the sanctification of his whole being:

Just as you once yielded your members to impurity and to greater and greater iniquity, so now yield your members to righteousness for sanctification.... But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the return you get is sanctification and its end, eternal life.

II. Grace

1996 Our justification comes from the grace of God. Grace is favor, the free and undeserved help that God gives us to respond to his call to become children of God, adoptive sons, partakers of the divine nature and of eternal life.

1997 Grace is a participation in the life of God. It introduces us into the intimacy of Trinitarian life: by Baptism the Christian participates in the grace of Christ, the Head of his Body. As an "adopted son" he can henceforth call God "Father," in union with the only Son. He receives the life of the Spirit who breathes charity into him and who forms the Church.

1998 This vocation to eternal life is supernatural. It depends entirely on God's gratuitous initiative, for he alone can reveal and give himself. It surpasses the power of human intellect and will, as that of every other creature.

1999 The grace of Christ is the gratuitous gift that God makes to us of his own life, infused by the Holy Spirit into our soul to heal it of sin and to sanctify it. It is the sanctifying or deifying grace received in Baptism. It is in us the source of the work of sanctification:

Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself.

2000 Sanctifying grace is an habitual gift, a stable and supernatural disposition that perfects the soul itself to enable it to live with God, to act by his love. Habitual grace, the permanent disposition to live and act in keeping with God's call, is distinguished from actual graces which refer to God's interventions, whether at the beginning of conversion or in the course of the work of sanctification.

2001 The preparation of man for the reception of grace is already a work of grace. This latter is needed to arouse and sustain our collaboration in justification through faith, and in sanctification through charity. God brings to completion in us what he has begun, "since he who completes his work by cooperating with our will began by working so that we might will it:"

Indeed we also work, but we are only collaborating with God who works, for his mercy has gone before us. It has gone before us so that we may be healed, and follows us so that once healed, we may be given life; it goes before us so that we may be called, and follows us so that we may be glorified; it goes before us so that we may live devoutly, and follows us so that we may always live with God: for without him we can do nothing.

2002 God's free initiative demands man's free response, for God has created man in his image by conferring on him, along with freedom, the power to know him and love him. the soul only enters freely into the communion of love. God immediately touches and directly moves the heart of man. He has placed in man a longing for truth and goodness that only he can satisfy. the promises of "eternal life" respond, beyond all hope, to this desire:

If at the end of your very good works . . . , you rested on the seventh day, it was to foretell by the voice of your book that at the end of our works, which are indeed "very good" since you have given them to us, we shall also rest in you on the sabbath of eternal life.

2003 Grace is first and foremost the gift of the Spirit who justifies and sanctifies us. But grace also includes the gifts that the Spirit grants us to associate us with his work, to enable us to collaborate in the salvation of others and in the growth of the Body of Christ, the Church. There are sacramental graces, gifts proper to the different sacraments. There are furthermore special graces, also called charisms after the Greek term used by St. Paul and meaning "favor," "gratuitous gift," "benefit." Whatever their character - sometimes it is extraordinary, such as the gift of miracles or of tongues - charisms are oriented toward sanctifying grace and are intended for the common good of the Church. They are at the service of charity which builds up the Church.

2004 Among the special graces ought to be mentioned the graces of state that accompany the exercise of the responsibilities of the Christian life and of the ministries within the Church:

Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; he who teaches, in his teaching; he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who contributes, in liberality; he who gives aid, with zeal; he who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

2005 Since it belongs to the supernatural order, grace escapes our experience and cannot be known except by faith. We cannot therefore rely on our feelings or our works to conclude that we are justified and saved. However, according to the Lord's words "Thus you will know them by their fruits" - reflection on God's blessings in our life and in the lives of the saints offers us a guarantee that grace is at work in us and spurs us on to an ever greater faith and an attitude of trustful poverty.

A pleasing illustration of this attitude is found in the reply of St. Joan of Arc to a question posed as a trap by her ecclesiastical judges: "Asked if she knew that she was in God's grace, she replied: 'If I am not, may it please God to put me in it; if I am, may it please God to keep me there.'"

III. Merit

You are glorified in the assembly of your Holy Ones, for in crowning their merits you are crowning your own gifts.

2006 The term "merit" refers in general to the recompense owed by a community or a society for the action of one of its members, experienced either as beneficial or harmful, deserving reward or punishment. Merit is relative to the virtue of justice, in conformity with the principle of equality which governs it.

2007 With regard to God, there is no strict right to any merit on the part of man. Between God and us there is an immeasurable inequality, for we have received everything from him, our Creator.

2008 The merit of man before God in the Christian life arises from the fact that God has freely chosen to associate man with the work of his grace. the fatherly action of God is first on his own initiative, and then follows man's free acting through his collaboration, so that the merit of good works is to be attributed in the first place to the grace of God, then to the faithful. Man's merit, moreover, itself is due to God, for his good actions proceed in Christ, from the predispositions and assistance given by the Holy Spirit.

2009 Filial adoption, in making us partakers by grace in the divine nature, can bestow true merit on us as a result of God's gratuitous justice. This is our right by grace, the full right of love, making us "co-heirs" with Christ and worthy of obtaining "the promised inheritance of eternal life." The merits of our good works are gifts of the divine goodness. "Grace has gone before us; now we are given what is due.... Our merits are God's gifts."

2010 Since the initiative belongs to God in the order of grace, no one can merit the initial grace of forgiveness and justification, at the beginning of conversion. Moved by the Holy Spirit and by charity, we can then merit for ourselves and for others the graces needed for our sanctification, for the increase of grace and charity, and for the attainment of eternal life. Even temporal goods like health and friendship can be merited in accordance with God's wisdom. These graces and goods are the object of Christian prayer. Prayer attends to the grace we need for meritorious actions.

2011 The charity of Christ is the source in us of all our merits before God. Grace, by uniting us to Christ in active love, ensures the supernatural quality of our acts and consequently their merit before God and before men. the saints have always had a lively awareness that their merits were pure grace.

After earth's exile, I hope to go and enjoy you in the fatherland, but I do not want to lay up merits for heaven. I want to work for your love alone.... In the evening of this life, I shall appear before you with empty hands, for I do not ask you, Lord, to count my works. All our justice is blemished in your eyes. I wish, then, to be clothed in your own justice and to receive from your love the eternal possession of yourself.

IV. Christian Holiness

2012 "We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him . . . For those whom he fore knew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the first-born among many brethren. and those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified."

2013 "All Christians in any state or walk of life are called to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of charity." All are called to holiness: "Be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

In order to reach this perfection the faithful should use the strength dealt out to them by Christ's gift, so that . . . doing the will of the Father in everything, they may wholeheartedly devote themselves to the glory of God and to the service of their neighbour. Thus the holiness of the People of God will grow in fruitful abundance, as is clearly shown in the history of the Church through the lives of so many saints.

2014 Spiritual progress tends toward ever more intimate union with Christ. This union is called "mystical" because it participates in the mystery of Christ through the sacraments - "the holy mysteries" - and, in him, in the mystery of the Holy Trinity. God calls us all to this intimate

union with him, even if the special graces or extraordinary signs of this mystical life are granted only to some for the sake of manifesting the gratuitous gift given to all.

2015 The way of perfection passes by way of the Cross. There is no holiness without renunciation and spiritual battle. Spiritual progress entails the asceticism and mortification that gradually lead to living in the peace and joy of the Beatitudes:

He who climbs never stops going from beginning to beginning, through beginnings that have no end. He never stops desiring what he already knows.

2016 The children of our holy mother the Church rightly hope for the grace of final perseverance and the recompense of God their Father for the good works accomplished with his grace in communion with Jesus. Keeping the same rule of life, believers share the "blessed hope" of those whom the divine mercy gathers into the "holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband."

2017 The grace of the Holy Spirit confers upon us the righteousness of God. Uniting us by faith and Baptism to the Passion and Resurrection of Christ, the Spirit makes us sharers in his life.

2018 Like conversion, justification has two aspects. Moved by grace, man turns toward God and away from sin, and so accepts forgiveness and righteousness from on high.

2019 Justification includes the remission of sins, sanctification, and the renewal of the inner man.

2020 Justification has been merited for us by the Passion of Christ. It is granted us through Baptism. It conforms us to the righteousness of God, who justifies us. It has for its goal the glory of God and of Christ, and the gift of eternal life. It is the most excellent work of God's mercy.

2021 Grace is the help God gives us to respond to our vocation of becoming his adopted sons. It introduces us into the intimacy of the Trinitarian life.

2022 The divine initiative in the work of grace precedes, prepares, and elicits the free response of man. Grace responds to the deepest yearnings of human freedom, calls freedom to cooperate with it, and perfects freedom.

2023 Sanctifying grace is the gratuitous gift of his life that God makes to us; it is infused by the Holy Spirit into the soul to heal it of sin and to sanctify it.

2024 Sanctifying grace makes us "pleasing to God." Charisms, special graces of the Holy Spirit, are oriented to sanctifying grace and are intended for the common good of the Church. God also acts through many actual graces, to be distinguished from habitual grace which is permanent in us.

2025 We can have merit in God's sight only because of God's free plan to associate man with the work of his grace. Merit is to be ascribed in the first place to the grace of God, and secondly to man's collaboration. Man's merit is due to God.

2026 The grace of the Holy Spirit can confer true merit on us, by virtue of our adoptive filiation, and in accordance with God's gratuitous justice. Charity is the principal source of merit in us before God.

2027 No one can merit the initial grace which is at the origin of conversion. Moved by the Holy Spirit, we can merit for ourselves and for others all the graces needed to attain eternal life, as well as necessary temporal goods.

2028 *"All Christians . . . are called to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of charity" (LG 40 # 2). "Christian perfection has but one limit, that of having none" (St. Gregory of Nyssa, De vita Mos.: PG 44, 300D).*

2029 *"If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (Mt 16:24).*

Letter from the Prelate (9 January 2018)

“In the human realm,” Saint Josemaria said, “I want to leave you as an inheritance love for freedom and good humour.” The Prelate invites us to reflect on the gift of freedom, in this letter dated on the Founder's birthday.



My dear children: may Jesus watch over my daughters and sons for me!

1. Following a guideline of the General Congress, over the past months I have frequently made reference to freedom. Now, in accord with the teachings of Saint Josemaria, who throughout his life was a lover of freedom, I want us to recall some aspects of this great gift from God. “I will never tire of repeating, my children,” he once told us, “that one of the clearest characteristics of the spirit of Opus Dei is its love for freedom and for the need to understand others.”^[1] As we reread and meditate on his words, let us give heartfelt thanks to God. And let each of us examine how we can give better expression to these words in our own life, with God’s grace. Thus we will also be better prepared to help more souls attain “the glorious liberty of the children of God” (*Rom 8:21*).

An ardent desire for freedom, the demand for it on the part of persons and peoples, is a positive sign of our times. Acknowledging the freedom of each woman and man means acknowledging that they are persons: masters of their own acts and responsible for them, able to direct their own lives. Although freedom does not always lead everyone to develop into their best selves, we can never exaggerate its importance, since if we were not free we would not be able to love.

But unfortunately, in many circles there is great ignorance about what freedom really is. Often an illusory freedom without limits is aspired to, as though it were the ultimate goal of progress. And not infrequently, we are pained to see that this claim goes hand in hand with many forms of oppression and of apparent freedoms that in reality are only chains that enslave. This form of freedom, sooner or later, reveals its emptiness. “Some people think they are free if they can avoid God,” the Pope writes. “They fail to see that they remain existentially orphaned, helpless, homeless. They cease being pilgrims and become drifters.”[2]

Called to freedom

2. We have been “called to freedom” (*Gal 5:13*). Creation itself is a manifestation of divine freedom. The Genesis accounts give us a glimpse of God’s creative love, his joy in sharing with the world his goodness, his beauty (cf. *Gen 1:31*), and with human beings, his freedom (cf. *Gen 1:26-29*). In calling each of us into existence, God has made us able to choose and to love the good, and to respond with love to his Love. Nevertheless, our limitation as creatures makes it possible for us to separate ourselves from God. “It is a mystery of divine Wisdom that, when creating man *in his image and likeness* (cf. *Gen 1:26-29*), God wanted to run the sublime ‘risk’ of human freedom.”[3]

In fact, at the dawn of history this risk led to the rejection of God’s Love through the original sin. Thus the strength of human freedom’s attraction to the good was weakened, and the will was left to a certain degree inclined towards sin. Afterwards, personal sins weaken human freedom even more, and therefore sin always implies, to a greater or lesser degree, a form of slavery (cf. *Rom 6:17, 20*). Nevertheless, “man always remains free.”[4] Even though “his freedom is always fragile,”[5] it remains an essential good of each human person and needs to be protected. God is the first to respect and love it, since he “does not want slaves, but children.”[6]

3. “But where sin increased, grace abounded all the more” (*Rom 5:20*). Grace gives rise to a new and higher freedom for which “Christ has set us free” (*Gal, 5:1*). Our Lord frees us from sin through his words and actions, all of which have redemptive efficacy. Hence “this hymn to freedom is echoed in all the mysteries of our Catholic faith.”[7] I often remind you that we need to put Christ at the center of our lives. To discover the deepest meaning of freedom, we have to contemplate him. We are amazed to see the freedom of a God who, out of pure love, decides to abase himself by taking on flesh like ours. We see this freedom unfold throughout his steps on earth towards the sacrifice of the Cross. “I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord” (*Jn 10:17-18*). Human history has never witnessed an act as deeply free as our Lord’s self-giving on the Cross. “He gives himself up to death with the full freedom of Love.”[8]

Saint John’s gospel recounts a dialogue of our Lord with some persons who had believed in him. Jesus’ words resound with a clear promise: “*Veritas liberabit*

vos, the truth will make you free” (*Jn 8:32*). “How great a truth is this,” Saint Josemaria writes, “which opens the way to freedom and gives it meaning throughout our lives. I will sum it up for you, with the joy and certainty which flow from knowing there is a close relationship between God and his creatures. It is the knowledge that we have come from the hands of God, that the Blessed Trinity looks upon us with predilection, that we are children of so wonderful a Father. I ask my Lord to help us decide to take this truth to heart, to dwell upon it day by day; only then will we be acting as free men.”[9]

4. Our divine filiation enables our freedom to expand with all the strength that God has bestowed on it. It is not by emancipating ourselves from the Father’s house that we become free, but rather by embracing the reality that we are sons or daughters. “Anyone who does not realize that he is a child of God is unaware of the deepest truth about himself.”[10] Such a person is unaware of who he is and lives in conflict with himself. How liberating it is, then, to know that God loves us. How liberating is God’s pardon that allows us to return to ourselves and to our true home (cf. *Lk 15:17-24*). And when we pardon others, we also experience this liberation.

Our faith in God’s love for each one of us (cf. *1 Jn 4:16*) leads us to respond with love. We can love because he has loved us first (cf. *1 Jn 4:10*). It fills us with security to know that God’s infinite Love is to be found not only at the origin of our existence but also at every moment in our lives. For God is closer to us than we are to ourselves.[11] Realizing that God is waiting for us in each person (cf. *Mt 25:40*), and that he wants to make himself present in their lives also through us, leads us to strive to share abundantly with others what we have received. And in our lives, my daughters and sons, we have received and we receive a lot of love. Giving love to God and to others is the most proper act of freedom. Love *fulfills* freedom, it redeems it. Love enables freedom to discover its origin and goal in God’s Love. “Freedom finds its true meaning when it is put to the service of the truth which redeems, when it is spent in seeking God’s infinite Love which liberates us from all forms of slavery.”[12]

Our sense of divine filiation leads, then, to great interior freedom, to deep joy, and to the serene optimism of hope: *spe gaudentes* (*Rom 12:12*). Realizing we are God’s children also leads us to love the world, which came forth good from the hands of our Father God. It leads us to face life with the clear awareness that it is possible to do good, to conquer sin, and to bring the world to God. As Pope Francis said when contemplating our Mother: “From Mary, full of grace, we learn that Christian freedom is more than mere liberation from sin. It is freedom that enables us to see earthly realities in a new, spiritual light. It is the freedom to love God and our brothers and sisters with a pure heart, and to live a life of joyful hope for the coming of Christ’s Kingdom.”[13]

Freedom of spirit

5. Acting freely, without any sort of coercion, is proper to human dignity and, even more so, to the dignity of the daughters and sons of God. At the same time, we need to “fortify our love for a freedom that is not merely arbitrary, but is

rendered truly human by acknowledgment of the good that underlies it”: a freedom that is reconciled with God.[14]

Therefore I would like to stop and consider the importance of *freedom of spirit*. I am not referring to the ambiguous meaning sometimes given to this phrase, as acting in accord with one’s caprices and without restraint by any law. In reality, the freedom of every human person is limited materially by natural duties and acquired commitments (family, professional, civic, etc.). Nevertheless, we can act freely in everything we do, if we do it for love: “*Dilige et quod vis fac*: Love and do what you will.”[15] True freedom of spirit is this capacity and habitual attitude to act out of love, especially in the effort to follow what God is asking of us in each circumstance.

“Do you love me?” (*Jn* 21:17). The Christian life is a free response, imbued with initiative and availability, to our Lord’s question. Therefore “it is utterly false to oppose freedom and self-surrender, because self-surrender is a consequence of freedom. Look, when a mother sacrifices herself for love of her children, she has made a choice, and the more she loves the greater will be her freedom. If her love is great, her freedom will bear much fruit. Her children’s good derives from her blessed freedom, which presupposes self-surrender, and from her blessed self-surrender, which is precisely freedom.”[16]

In this context we can understand why encouraging the freedom of each person does not mean a lessening in demands. The freer we are, the more we can love. And love is demanding: “Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things” (*1 Cor* 13:7). In turn, growing in love means growing in freedom, being more free. As Saint Thomas Aquinas wrote: “*Quanto aliquis plus habet de caritate, plus habet de libertate*.”[17] The more intense our charity is, the freer we are. We also act with freedom of spirit when we don’t feel like doing something or find it especially difficult, if we do it out of love, that is, not because we like it, but because we want to. “We should all realize that we are God’s children, and strive to fulfill the will of our Father. We should do things as God wants them done, *because we want to*, which is the most supernatural of reasons.”[18]

6. Cheerfulness is also a sign of freedom of spirit. “In the human realm,” Saint Josemaria said, “I want to leave you as an inheritance love for freedom and good humor.”[19] These two things can seem quite distinct, but they are actually closely connected, since realizing that we are *free to love* floods our soul with joy, and with it good humor. Our vision of the world deepens beyond the merely natural and we learn to grasp the positive—and, sometimes, amusing—side of things and situations. As Pope Francis said, God “is the author of joy, the Creator of joy. And this joy in the Spirit brings us true Christian freedom. Without joy, we Christians can’t be free, and we become slaves of our sadness.”[20]

This joy needs to imbue our whole life. God wants us to be happy. In speaking to the Apostles, Jesus is also speaking to us: “that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full” (*Jn* 15:11). Therefore we can carry out joyfully even duties that we may find unpleasant. As Saint Josemaria tells us, “we shouldn’t think that the only work we can do joyfully is what we find pleasing.”^[21] We can carry out joyfully—and not reluctantly—what we find hard, what doesn’t please us, if we do it for and with love, and therefore freely. When doing his prayer out loud, on 28 April 1963, Saint Josemaria spoke about the lights God had granted him years before in 1931: “You have led me to understand, Lord, that having the Cross means finding happiness, joy. And the reason, as I now see more clearly than ever, is this: having the Cross means being identified with Christ, being Christ, and therefore being a child of God.”^[22]

7. The whole of the divine law, and everything that is God’s will for each person, is not a law that restricts freedom. Rather it is *lex perfecta libertatis* (cf. *Jas* 1:25), the perfect law of freedom. So too is the Gospel, since all of it is summed up in the law of love—and not only as an exterior rule that requires love, but also as the interior grace that gives us the strength to love. “*Pondus meum amor meus*”: my love is my weight, Saint Augustine said, referring not simply to the obvious fact that at times it is hard for us to love, but to the fact that the love we have in our heart is what leads us on, what carries us to wherever we go.^[23] “*Eo feror, quocumque feror*”: wherever I am carried, my love is carrying me.^[24] Each of us can consider: what is the love that carries me everywhere?

Anyone who lets God’s Love take hold in their heart, personally experiences how true it is “that freedom and self-surrender are not contradictory. They sustain one another. Freedom can only be given up for love; I cannot conceive any other reason for surrendering it. And I am not just playing with words or phrases. When people give themselves freely, at every moment of their self-surrender, freedom renews their love, and to be renewed in that way is to be always young, generous, capable of high ideals and great sacrifices.”^[25] Obeying God, therefore, is not only a free act, but also a freeing, liberating act.

“I have food to eat of which you do not know,” Jesus tells his disciples. “My food is to do the will of him who sent me, and to accomplish his work” (*Jn* 4:32-34). For Jesus, obeying the Father is what nourishes him, what gives him strength. And so it should be for us. Being Jesus’ disciple, Saint John Paul II said, means “*holding fast to the very person of Jesus*, partaking of his life and his destiny, sharing in his free and loving obedience to the will of the Father.”^[26]

Benedict XVI goes more deeply into this intimate relationship between freedom and self-giving: “It is in his very obedience to the Father that Jesus achieves his own freedom as a conscious decision motivated by love. Who is freer than the One who is the Almighty? He did not, however, live his freedom as an arbitrary power or as domination. He lived it as a service. In this way he ‘filled’ freedom with content, which would otherwise have remained an ‘empty’ possibility of

doing or not doing something. Like human life itself, freedom draws its meaning from love . . . Therefore, Christian freedom is quite the opposite of arbitrariness; it consists in following Christ in the gift of self even to the sacrifice of the Cross. It may seem a paradox, but the Lord lived the crowning point of his freedom on the Cross as a summit of love. When they shouted at him on Calvary: ‘If you are the Son of God, come down from the Cross!’, he showed his freedom as the Son precisely by remaining on that scaffold, to do the Father’s merciful will to the very end.”[27]

“Lord, you enticed me, and I was taken in. You were too strong for me, and you prevailed” (*Jer 20:7*). What a breadth of feeling is found in this prayer of the prophet Jeremias. Seeing one’s own vocation as a gift from God (and not as a mere list of obligations), even when we are suffering, is also a sign of freedom of spirit. How liberating it is to know that God loves us as we are, and that he calls us first of all to let ourselves be loved by him.

8. Freedom of spirit also means not binding ourselves to obligations that are not real—being able to set aside and change with flexibility so many small details in life that depend on our free personal initiative. As Don Javier wrote to us twenty years ago: “There are, of course, actions which we are obliged to carry out and others which, in a given instance, we are not specifically obliged to do. However, in both cases we have to seek to fulfill freely and responsibly the supreme commandment of love for God. Thus we are free and obedient at the same time and at every moment.”[28]

We need to always preserve in the Work the atmosphere of trust and freedom that enables us to make known to the relevant person what is worrying us, and talk about what we don’t understand or what we think should be improved. This atmosphere of trust, in turn, is also nourished by our loyalty and patience in accepting, with serenity and good humor, human limitations, annoying situations, etc. This is the attitude of good sons or daughters who, although they may be convinced they are right, exercise their freedom by seeking to protect goods greater than their own point of view, goods such as unity and family peace, which are priceless. In contrast, “when our ideas separate us from other people, when they weaken our communion, our unity with our brothers, it is a sure sign that we are not doing what God wants.”[29]

9. Although sometimes situations can make us suffer, God frequently uses these to identify us more closely with Jesus. As we read in the Letter to the Hebrews, he “learned obedience through what he suffered” (*Heb 5:8*) and thus brought “eternal salvation to all who obey him” (*5:9*). Jesus brought us the freedom of the children of God. Accepting the human limitations that we all have, without giving up in our effort to overcome them as far as possible, is also a sign and source of freedom of spirit. Consider in contrast the sad attitude of the elder son in the parable (*Lk 15:25-30*). He complained to his father about so many things that he had been keeping bitterly in his soul, and was unable to join in the family’s joy. His freedom had become small and selfish, incapable of loving, of

understanding that “all that is mine is yours” (*Lk 15:31*). He was living at home, but he was not free, because his heart was elsewhere.

How beautiful, in contrast, is the story of Ruth, the Moabite woman, whose freedom and self-giving are rooted in a deep sense of belonging to her family. It is moving to see how this woman responds to the insistence of her mother-in-law, who encourages her to remake her life on her own: “Entreat me not to leave you or to return from following you; for where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God; where you die I will die, and there will I be buried” (*Ruth 1:16-17*).

In contemplating our Lady, we see even more clearly how freedom unfolds in faithful self-giving. “Consider now the sublime moment when the Archangel Gabriel announces to the Virgin Mary the plans of the Most High. Our Mother listens, and asks a question to understand better what the Lord is asking of her. Then she gives her firm reply: *Fiat!* Be it done unto me according to thy word! This is the fruit of the best freedom of all, the freedom of deciding in favor of God.”^[30]

Forming and governing free people

10. In our formation, personal spiritual direction plays an important role. It should always be carried out in an atmosphere of freedom and aim at forming people who feel “as free as the birds.”^[31] As Saint Josemaria writes, referring to those who receive the personal chats of their brothers or sisters, “the authority of the spiritual director is not power. Always instill in souls a great spirit of freedom. Consider what I have so often told you: *because I want to* seems to me the most supernatural reason of all. The role of the spiritual director is to help the soul to want to fulfill, to ‘feel like’ fulfilling, God’s will. Don’t command, advise.”^[32] The aim of the advice given in spiritual direction is to second the action of the Holy Spirit in each soul and help each person to approach God and his or her own duties with personal freedom and responsibility. “In creating souls, God does not repeat himself. Each one is the way he or she is, and we have to treat each one according to what God has done, and according to the way that God is leading them.”^[33]

Along with advice, ordinarily there can also be some affectionate encouragement that helps them realize *it is always worthwhile* to strive to be faithful out of love, freely. Spiritual direction can also occasionally contain a clear, but always affectionate and refined, “imperative counsel,” which reminds the person of the obligation to fulfill a duty. The force of this advice, however, does not stem from the advice itself, but from the duty involved. When there is trust, one can and should speak in this way, and the person who receives that indication is grateful for it, because they recognize in it the fortitude and affection of an older brother or sister.

11. The formation that we receive throughout our whole life, without disregarding its necessary demands, tends to a large degree to *open up new horizons*. In contrast, if we limit ourselves to just making demands and being

demanding of, we can end up seeing only what we are not managing to do, our defects and limitations. We can forget about the most important thing: God's love for us.

In this context, let us recall how Saint Josemaria taught us that "in the Work, we are great friends of freedom, including in the interior life. We aren't tied to particular schemes or methods . . . There is a lot—there should be a lot—of self-determination even in the spiritual life."^[34] Therefore sincerity in spiritual direction, which leads us to open up our soul freely in order to receive advice, also leads us to foster personal initiative, to make known freely what we see as possible points for our interior struggle to identify ourselves ever more closely with Christ.

Therefore our formation, while passing on the same spirit to everyone, does not produce uniformity, but rather unity. Making use of a striking image, Saint Josemaria said that in the Work "we can travel along this path in many different ways: staying on the right or on the left, zigzagging from side to side, on foot or by horse. There are thousands of ways to advance along our divine path. Each one's conscience, in keeping with their particular circumstances, will oblige them to go forward in one or another of these ways. The only thing essential is not to leave the path."^[35] The spirit of the Work, like the Gospel, does not impose itself on our way of being, but rather gives it life. It is a seed destined to grow in the earth of each person.

12. In our formation, it is also important to prevent an excessive desire for security or protection from inhibiting the soul and restricting us. "Those who have met Christ cannot shut themselves in their own little world; how sad such a limitation would be! They must open out like a fan in order to reach all souls."^[36] How important it is, then, to form ourselves in the need to live without fear of making mistakes, without fear of failing, without fear of an adverse environment. With supernatural outlook we need to be involved—with prudence and determination—in our own social and professional environment.

Love for freedom is also shown, therefore, in spontaneity and initiative in the apostolate, made compatible with one's specific apostolic assignments. It is important always to be very aware that "our apostolate is, above all, personal apostolate."^[37] The same holds true for the encouragement directors give to apostolic activities. "I have never wanted to tie you down. On the contrary, I have tried to ensure that you work with great freedom. In your apostolic action you have to have initiative, within the very broad margins provided by our spirit, in order to find—in each place, in each environment, in each epoch—the activities best suited to the circumstances."^[38]

13. Another important sign of love for freedom is found in the pastoral government that falls to the Prelate and his Vicars, with the help of their corresponding Councils. Let us meditate once again with gratitude on these words of Saint Josemaria: "As a consequence of this spirit of freedom,

formation—and government—in the Work is based on trust. . . . Nothing can be accomplished if government is based on distrust. In contrast, governing and forming souls with respect produces fruit. It develops in souls the true and holy freedom of God’s children and teaches them to administer their own freedom. To form and to govern is to love.”^[39]

Governing with respect for souls is, firstly, to delicately respect the privacy of consciences, without confusing government and spiritual direction. Secondly, this respect leads one to distinguish directives from what are only opportune exhortations, counsels, or suggestions. And thirdly—and not, for that reason, less important—is the need to govern with such great trust in others that one always tries to take into account, to the extent possible, the opinion of the people involved. This attitude of those who govern, their readiness to listen, is a wonderful manifestation of the fact that the Work is a family.

We also have grateful experience of the full freedom there is in Opus Dei in matters open to opinion in economics, politics, theology, etc. “In everything that is not a matter of faith, each member thinks and acts as he or she wishes with complete freedom and personal responsibility. The pluralism which logically and sociologically derives from this fact does not create any problems for the Work. Rather, it is a sign of good spirit.”^[40] This pluralism should be loved and fostered, although someone may find this diversity hard to accept at times. A person who loves freedom manages to see the positive and attractive aspects of what others think and do in these broad areas.

As regards the way government is carried out, Saint Josemaria established and always forcefully reminded us of the need for collegiality, which is another manifestation of the spirit of freedom that imbues our life in Opus Dei. “I have reminded you in a great variety of circumstances, and I will repeat it many times over the course of my life, that I demand in the Work, at all levels, collegial government, so that no one will fall into tyranny. This is a manifestation of prudence, since with collegial government matters are studied more easily, errors are corrected better, and the apostolic works that are already going well are improved more effectively.”^[41]

Collegiality is not only or principally a method or system for making decisions; it is, above all, a spirit, rooted in the conviction that all of us can and need to receive from others insights, information, etc., that will help us to improve and even to change our opinion. At the same time, this leads to respecting—even more, to fostering in a positive way—the freedom of the others, so that they can make known their own points of view without any difficulty.

Respecting and defending freedom in the apostolate

14. Our apostolate stems from a sincere desire to help others find Christ or grow in intimacy with him. “Our attitude towards souls can be summed up in this phrase from the Apostle, which is almost a shout: *caritas mea cum omnibus vobis in Christo Iesu!* (1 Cor 16:24): my affection for all of you, in Christ Jesus.

With charity, you will be sowers of peace and joy in the world, loving and defending the personal freedom of souls, the freedom that Christ respects and won for us (cf. *Gal 4:31*).”[42]

We love, first of all, the freedom of those we are trying to help come closer to our Lord, in the apostolate of friendship and trust which Saint Josemaria invites us to carry out by our witness and word. “Also in our apostolic activities—better: principally in our apostolic activities—we don’t want there to be even the slightest shadow of coercion. God wants to be served freely, and therefore an apostolate that did not respect the ‘freedom of consciences’ would not be upright.”[43]

True friendship entails sincere mutual affection, which is the true protection of the reciprocal freedom and intimacy that exists between friends. Apostolate is not something superimposed on friendship, because (as I wrote you), “we don’t ‘do apostolate,’ we are apostles!”[44] Friendship is itself apostolate; friendship is itself a dialogue in which we give and receive light. In friendship plans are forged as we mutually open up new horizons. In friendship we rejoice in what is good and support one another in what is difficult; we have a good time with one another, since God wants us to be happy.

15. As you know, proselytism, understood in its original meaning, is a positive reality, nothing other than the missionary activity of spreading the Gospel.[45] That was how Saint Josemaria always understood the term, and not with the negative meaning it has acquired in more recent times. Still, we need to keep in mind that, despite what we would like, at times words take on new connotations different from their original meaning. Therefore consider carefully, in light of the context, the fittingness of employing this term, since at times your hearers could understand something different from what you want to say.

Respecting and defending the freedom of everyone is also made manifest—if possible, even more clearly—when raising with someone the possibility of God’s call to the Work. Here we mean the freedom to seek advice from whomever one wants and, above all, full freedom in discerning one’s own possible vocation and in the ensuing decision. When commenting on a forceful expression in the Gospel, the *compelle intrare* (force them to enter) of the parable (*Lk 14:23*), Saint Josemaria wrote: “A chief characteristic of our spirit is respect for the personal freedom of everyone. Thus the *compelle intrare* that you should employ in your proselytism is not a physical push but an abundance of light, of doctrine. It is the spiritual stimulus of your prayer and work, which bear authentic witness to doctrine. It is all the sacrifices you offer. It is the smile that comes to your lips because you are children of God: the filiation that fills you with a serene happiness (even though setbacks will not be lacking in your life) and that others will see and envy. Add to this your human bearing and charm and here we have the content of the *compelle intrare*.”[46] How clear it is, then, that the Work grows and should always grow in an atmosphere of freedom, by

presenting to others—with determination and simplicity—the dazzling beauty of living close to God.

16. *Veritas liberabit vos* (*Jn* 8:32). All the promises of liberation that have followed one upon another throughout the centuries are true to the extent that they are nourished by the Truth about God and man. And this Truth is a Person: Jesus, the Way, the Truth and the Life (cf. *Jn* 14:6). “Today also, even after two thousand years, we see Christ as the one who brings man freedom based on truth, frees man from what curtails, diminishes and as it were breaks off this freedom at its root, in man’s soul, his heart and his conscience.”^[47]

God has given us freedom forever; it is not a temporary gift, to employ only during our life here on earth. Freedom, like love, “never ends” (*1 Cor* 13:8), but it continues in heaven. Our path to heaven is a path towards the freedom of the glory of the children of God: *in libertatem gloriæ filiorum Dei* (*Rom* 8:21). In heaven our freedom not only won’t disappear, but rather will attain its fullness in embracing God’s Love. “In heaven a great Love awaits you, with no betrayals and no deceptions. The fullness of love, the fullness of beauty and greatness and knowledge . . . And it will never cloy: it will satiate, yet still you will want more.”^[48] If we are faithful, by God’s mercy, in heaven we will be fully free, with the fullness of love.

Your Father blesses you with all his affection,

Rome, 9 January 2018, anniversary of the birth of Saint Josemaria

[1] Saint Josemaria, *Letter*, 31 May 1954, no. 22.

[2] Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii gaudium*, 24 November 2013, no. 170.

[3] Saint Josemaria, *Letter*, 24 October 1965, no. 3.

[4] Benedict XVI, Encyclical *Spe salvi*, 30 November 2007, no. 24.

[5] *Ibid.*

[6] Saint Josemaria, *Christ is Passing By*, no. 129.

[7] Saint Josemaria, *Friends of God*, no. 25.

[8] Saint Josemaria, *The Way of the Cross*, 10th Station.

[9] Saint Josemaria, *Friends of God*, no. 26.

[10] *Ibid.*

[11] Cf. Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, III, 6, 11.

[12] Saint Josemaria, *Friends of God*, no. 27.

[13] Pope Francis, *Homily*, 15 August 2014.

- [14] Benedict XVI, Encyclical *Caritas in veritate*, 29 June 2009, no. 68.
- [15] Saint Augustine, *In Epist. Ioan. ad Parthos*, VII, 8.
- [16] Saint Josemaria, *Friends of God*, no. 30.
- [17] Saint Thomas, *In III Sent.*, d. 29, q. un., a. 8, q1a. 3 s.c. 1.
- [18] Saint Josemaria, *Christ is Passing By*, no. 17.
- [19] Saint Josemaria, *Letter*, 31 May 1954, no. 22.
- [20] Pope Francis, Homily, 31 May 2013.
- [21] Saint Josemaria, *Letter*, 29 December 1947, no. 106.
- [22] Saint Josemaria, Notes from a meditation, 28 April 1963.
- [23] Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, XIII, 9, 10.
- [24] *Ibid.*
- [25] Saint Josemaria, *Friends of God*, no. 31.
- [26] Saint John Paul II, Encyclical *Veritatis splendor*, 6 August 1993, no. 19.
- [27] Benedict XVI, Angelus Address, 1 July 2007.
- [28] Javier Echevarría, *Pastoral letter*, 14 February 1997, no. 15.
- [29] Saint Josemaria, *Christ is Passing By*, no. 17.
- [30] Saint Josemaria, *Friends of God*, no. 25.
- [31] Saint Josemaria, *Letter*, 14 September 1951, no. 38.
- [32] Saint Josemaria, *Letter*, 8 August 1956, no. 38.
- [33] *Ibid.*
- [34] Saint Josemaria, *Letter*, 29 September 1957, no. 70.
- [35] Saint Josemaria, *Letter*, 2 February 1945, no. 19.
- [36] Saint Josemaria, *Furrow*, no. 193.
- [37] Saint Josemaria, *Letter*, 2 October 1939, no. 10.
- [38] Saint Josemaria, *Letter*, 24 October 1942, no. 46.
- [39] Saint Josemaria, *Letter*, 6 May 1945, no. 39.
- [40] Saint Josemaria, *Conversations*, no. 98.
- [41] Saint Josemaria, *Letter*, 24 December 1951, no. 5.
- [42] Saint Josemaria, *Letter*, 16 July 1933, no. 3.
- [43] Saint Josemaria, *Letter*, 9 January 1932, no. 66.
- [44] *Pastoral letter*, 14 February 2017, no. 9.
- [45] Cf. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Doctrinal Note on Some Aspects of Evangelization*, 3 December 2007, no. 12 and note 49.
- [46] Saint Josemaria, *Letter*, 24 October 1942, no. 9.
- [47] Saint John Paul II, Encyclical *Redemptor hominis*, 4 March 1979, no. 12.
- [48] Saint Josemaria, *The Forge*, no. 995.

Chapter 3: Will, Reason and Sentiments in the Exercise of Freedom

The image of God in man means intellect, free will and power over oneself (St John Damascene).²¹⁰

Let us look at the role of human faculties in the exercise of freedom; **how St Josemaría sees these factors.**

How do the intellect, will and sentiments influence our freedom? We can find confusion around this topic, both in theory and in practice. Sometimes we prioritise one over the others, as we see in voluntarism, rationalism or sentimentalism.

In Christianity, the view of human beings and human freedom reflects the harmony between intellect, will and sentiments that we see in Christ, perfect man. This balanced approach comes from Revelation. St Josemaría takes this and presents it from the perspective of the spirit of divine filiation and sanctification in the middle of the world.

Before we move into the topic, we need to clarify some terms. The first refers to the title of this chapter, 'Will, reason and sentiments...'. They can seem unlikely companions given that the intellect and will are spiritual faculties and the sentiments are passing states of the sense faculties. A subtitle 'reason, will and the sense faculties' perhaps would be more accurate, but this could give the impression that freedom arises from the sense faculties themselves the same way it does from the intellect and will, which is not the case.

The intellect and will, spiritual faculties of the human soul, are the root of human freedom. The sentiments, on the other hand, come from the sense faculties, and even though they are very influential in the exercise of freedom because we are a substantial unity of body and soul, they are not a source of freedom, at least in this way.

The second point is that the subtitle does not refer to the 'heart, a term that commonly expresses the sentiments and affections. We use it together with the will and reason, based on the biblical use of the term 'heart'. St Josemaría uses it in this way.

When we speak of a person's heart, we refer not just to his sentiments, but to the whole person in his loving dealings with others. In order to help us understand divine things, Scripture uses the expression "heart" in its full human meaning, as the summary and source, expression and

²¹⁰ St John Damascene, *De fide orth.* II, 12.

ultimate basis, of one's thoughts, words and actions. A man is worth what his heart is worth.²¹¹

Some 20th century thinkers (such as Hildebrand) took issue with the binary of intellect and will as the only higher powers of the soul. They saw the heart as a third spiritual capacity equal to the others. For St Josemaría, on the other hand, the heart sometimes is used to refer to the person. The person cannot be reduced to his or her faculties.

To speak of the heart refers to the intimate nucleus of the whole person, thought, desires, feelings. It is a word that highlights the unity of this nucleus/core and highlights the fact that the spiritual life is not the life of a disembodied spirit but of a human man or woman of flesh and blood, with affections, sentiments and emotions. 'Note that God does not say: "in exchange for your own heart, I will give you a will of pure spirit." No, he gives us a heart, a human heart, like Christ's.'²¹²

Freedom, will and reason

The free act ... is the fruit of the encounter between reason, which seeks the truth, and the will, which is directed towards the good.²¹³

Let us begin with the role of the will and reason. Christian tradition teaches that man is given freedom by virtue of his spiritual soul and spiritual potencies of understanding and will. Free choice, freedom of exercise is an act of the will because it is a wanting/desire but reason is also involved because the will aspires to something guided by reason, with knowledge of the end/goal. So freedom has a double root:

The root of liberty is the will as the subject thereof; but it is the reason as its cause. For the will can tend freely towards various objects, precisely because the reason can have various perceptions of good. Hence philosophers define the free-will as being "a free judgment arising from reason."²¹⁴

We are interested now in how this works in a Christian in the state of grace who seeks holiness. The will we speak of is one filled with charity, and reason is reason enlightened by faith. The freedom of a child of God is rooted in faith informed by charity, and so they can do many things that are not reasonable from a human standpoint. St Josemaría himself undertook in his lifetime many projects that we, humanly speaking, would consider, mad.²¹⁵ This helps us understand an expression St Josemaría used in relation to freedom: I'm doing it 'because I want to' (*'porque me da la gana.'*)

²¹¹ Saint Josemaría, *Christ is Passing By*, no. 164.

²¹², Saint Josemaría, *Christ is Passing By*, no. 166.

²¹³ Paul O'Callaghan, *Children of God in the World*, (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2016), 450. The reason judges, specifies the object of choice and with it the end, while the fulfilment of the act is in the will, which is attracted by the good.

²¹⁴ *S. Th.*, I-II q. 17, a. 1, ad. 2.

²¹⁵ *The Way*, 479; *Furrow*, 2 & *Forge*, 870.

"I love you Lord, because I want to love you"²¹⁶

"You lovingly reach out your hand to me and I, with your grace, try to take yours, because I want to...because I love you".²¹⁷

He is referring here to owning one's own acts, which is far from fear or coercion. It is not mindless, voluntaristic or guided by instinct (following feelings). 'We often want to do something even if we don't feel like it: we do it for love, all for Love, a loyal love.'²¹⁸

The will is the faculty of wanting, which wants, is the first root of freedom. But it needs the guidance of reason enlightened by faith, to show it what is good: to know and love God, to fulfil his will.

Freedom finds its true meaning when it is put to the service of the truth which redeems, when it is spent in seeking God's infinite Love which liberates us from all forms of slavery. ... This is essentially what is meant by a 'good will', which teaches us to pursue 'good', after having distinguished it from evil.²¹⁹

God made us free so we can love him. Freedom allows us to give glory to God, 'to give' Him something, our own will, our love. Properly speaking we can't give anything to God in the sense of adding to his perfections, but we can love him because we are free, we can give ourselves to God. We can give him our very selves. We can freely give God the freedom he has given us.²²⁰ Jesus tells us: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart" (Mt 22:37).

He himself points out what he desires from us. He does not care for riches, nor for the fruits or the beasts of the earth, nor for the sea or the air, because they all belong to him. He wants something intimate, which we have to give him freely: "My son, give me your heart (Prov. 23, 26)."²²¹

Jesus seeks Peter's love, 'Simon, son of John, do you love me?', and he responds, 'Yes, Lord, you know that I love you' (Jn 21:16). He seeks not only Peter's love but that of each person, even though we are sinners.

The love that gives meaning to freedom is not an ineffective desire, but the gift of self, giving oneself to fulfil God's will. St Josemaría uses the expression 'because I want to', to express this gift of self.

I opt for God because I want to, freely, without compulsion of any kind. And I undertake to serve, to convert my whole life into a means of serving others, out of love for my Lord Jesus.²²²

²¹⁶ Points from a meditation, 21.11.1954 (AGP, P09, p. 19).

²¹⁷ *Letter*, 19.3.1967, no. 134.

²¹⁸ Points from preaching, 27.9.1967 (AGP, P03 12-1967, p. 19). Also see *Friends of God*, no. 32.

²¹⁹ Saint Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 27.

²²⁰ L. Polo, "El concepto de vida en Mons. Escrivá de Balaguer", in *La Personalidad del Beato Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer* (Pamplona: Eunsa, 1994), 173.

²²¹ Saint Josemaría, *Christ is Passing By*, no. 35.

²²² Saint Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 35.

In this giving of oneself to God, and for love of him to the good of the others, freedom finds its fullest meaning, because man, who is 'the only creature on earth which God willed for itself, cannot fully find himself except through a sincere gift of himself'.²²³

Deciding to live for love of God is not a blind choice. There are human and supernatural reasons. It is reasonable to give oneself to God. However the will is not compelled by good reasons. No one is more blind than a person who does not want to see. We can always close our eyes. Despite good reasons the will can want or not want what God asks. If we finally decide to give, it is because we are guided by those reasons, but not compelled by them. We put ourselves in God's hands and freely allow him to reign in our lives. St Josemaría refers to this as 'the most supernatural of reasons'.

For me and for my children the most supernatural reason for self-giving and for love is this: because I want to, because I love, because there is nothing in this world that can separate me from the love of Christ.²²⁴

Freedom has a double root: the will, as its object - and reason, as its cause. The feelings influence our actions, but they are not their root.

St Josemaría uses the term "because I want to" to refer to the act of personal donation, which is to give oneself to God, to give him one's love. This is what God expects of us.

Therefore deciding to lead a life of love for God is 'logical', human and supernaturally. That is the most reasonable thing to do. But the will may or may not want what God asks. If we decide to do God's will, we do so guided by those reasons, but not dragged by them.

"The most supernatural reason for dedication and Love is this: because I want to, because I want, because there is nothing in the world that can separate me from the charity of Christ"²²⁵.

Then perseverance is not the fruit of inertia, but requires present-day wilfulness, so it remains meritorious. The basis is grace: the one who started the work, will perfect it - will carry it out (Phil 1.6). Sin has wounded the double root of freedom ('What I want I do not; I do evil that I do not want', Rom 7). The will follows the apparent good and the intelligence can avoid considering things that it sees as unpleasant. Hence the importance of forming an upright intelligence and will so we can have a healthy freedom.

Knowledge of the truth

The truth will set us free? A child of God knows its lowliness and its greatness (grace), and the means of sanctification. It is not just the result of personal speculation, or study: It is God's gift, the gift of the Holy Spirit, which "makes us know God and rejoice

²²³ *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 24.

²²⁴ Saint Josemaría, *Letter*, 30.4.1946, no. 1. See also Rom 8:35, 38-39.

²²⁵ Saint Josemaría, *Letter*, 30.4.1946.

in his presence, thereby placing us in a perspective from which we can judge accurately the situations and events of this life."²²⁶

Formation of the will

It means to direct it towards the gift of self: to self-giving to God and to others for the love of God.

"I cannot understand freedom without surrender, nor surrender without freedom: one reality underscores and affirms the other"²²⁷.

Because freedom is realized with surrender to God: This is its fullest meaning; and surrender to God must be free. Things that hold us back or induce us to a half-hearted self-giving, weaken freedom. Freedom should never be kept 'untouched'.

"The indecisive, irresolute, are alike plastic matter moulded at the mercy of circumstances; anyone shapes it at will: first the passions and then the worst tendencies of nature wounded by sin"²²⁸.

Feelings and freedom

Life is not simply intellect and will; our feelings or affections profoundly influence the exercise of freedom.

"There is just one life, made of flesh and spirit. And it is this life which has to become, in both soul and body, holy and filled with God."²²⁹

Saint Josemaría did not have a spiritualist or disembodied idea of the Christian life: For him the sentiments are important, but he rejected sentimentalism where the sentiments take first place in the spiritual life, usurping the reason and will. For him the intellect connected with the will, emotions and sentiments, integrating all these faculties harmoniously to develop the personality and identification with Christ.

Some more terminology:

Sense faculty – appetite/inclination – directed to what's perceived by the sense. It influences reason and will.

Movements of this faculty are passions. They are responses aroused and are also called sentiments, affections or emotions. The Catechism of the Catholic Church uses this traditional terminology.

Passions come from the sense appetites.

²²⁶ Saint Josemaría, *Christ is Passing By*, no. 133.

²²⁷ Saint Josemaría, *Letter*, 31.5.1954, no. 24.

²²⁸ Notes of Preaching, 21.VI.1972 (AGP, P01, 7.1972, p. 13).

²²⁹ Saint Josemaría, *Conversations*, no. 114.

They arise in response to a good or bad perceived by the senses. They can arise before we are aware of them, before reason and will get involved. These are called antecedent passions because they come into play before we do a free act; we feel them without consenting to them. Insofar as this happens they are not free and so are neither morally good nor evil. St Josemaría says about these: 'Whatever happens, there is no need to worry as long as you don't consent. For only the will can open the door of the heart and let that corruption in'.²³⁰

The antecedent passions are important in the spiritual life because they influence reason and indirectly the will.

Passions can also be born as a consequence of a voluntary act. We call these consequent passions. We provoke them, consent to them or we can foresee what might cause them and desire it. These are really important in the spiritual life.

The passions that separate us from good influence us, and it is also important to do the good with passion, not coldly. The reason and will need to be helped to a certain degree by the energy of the passions.²³¹ They can also make it easier for us to know good and help direct the will.

So, when we need to fulfil a duty that includes tasks we don't like, we can do it first because we want to do it, and then make the effort to do what we don't feel like. Even if a duty is not initially attractive (antecedent passion), it doesn't mean that we shouldn't do it, because taste/preference is not law (the rule of taste).

Perfecting ourselves as human beings means we try to do things with our heart in it, with enthusiasm, trying to arouse consequent passions (e.g.: thinking of how our effort will make someone else happy/surprised, etc.). St Josemaría often used the word '*gustosamente*' (gladly), applying it to things that by their nature aren't usually pleasurable. For example, he speaks of 'gladly be[ing] a man of penance';²³² of being able to put oneself out, gladly, for the love of Christ;²³³ encourages people to 'gladly ... [bear] small contradictions, shortages and little urgent problems',²³⁴ and to gladly give our lives for each other.²³⁵

²³⁰ Saint Josemaría *The Way*, no. 140.

²³¹ *S. Th*, I-II, q. 24, a. 3, c.

²³² Saint Josemaría *The Way*, no. 548.

²³³ Saint Josemaría *Forge*, no. 519.

²³⁴ Saint Josemaría *Furrow*, no. 411.

²³⁵ Saint Josemaría *Furrow*, no. 750.

Ordering the sentiments with reason and will

The Gospels reveal Jesus' sentiments:

They tell us of his compassion for the sick, of his sorrow for those who were ignorant or in error, his anger at the money changers who profaned the temple; his heart was touched by the sorrow of the widow at Naim.²³⁶

These are just a few examples that show the role of the sentiments in the life of Our Lord and, as a consequence, in that of a child of God. Any Christian who wants to identify with Him, should try to have 'the same sentiments of Christ Jesus' (Phil 2:5). Not because identifying with Christ means having exactly the same sentiments, but because they contribute to helping us use our freedom to love God and others, which is the essence of holiness or identification with Christ.²³⁷

Among the sentiments, St Josemaría mentions three 'dominant passions' that are key to the path of holiness in Opus Dei²³⁸. These are giving doctrine, guiding others by our words and example, and love for unity (when referring to the faithful in Opus Dei he focused on love for unity in the Work, but we also can apply this to love for unity in the Church).

He called these, 'passions', to emphasise vigour and naturalness. He called them 'dominant' because they order the soul's energies in the same direction of faith and love for God and others.

These three dominant passions refer to the diverse aspects of the Christian mission. We can see a correlation between these and the three offices of Christ: the passion for giving doctrine (teaching: Prophet), directing souls (governing: King), and unity to the sanctifying mission (sanctifying: Priest).

These dominant passions help us carry out the mission of Christ and identify us with the sentiments of Christ.

The sentiments can powerfully influence growth in the spiritual life. They can also be an obstacle to it, misdirect or corrupt it. If they are to help us identify with Christ, they need to be under the dominion of the will, which is directed by reason enlightened by faith.²³⁹ As a consequence of sin the sentiments tend to escape the order of reason and affect our judgement. 'The human passions easily obscure reality'.²⁴⁰ If we don't dominate them, we end up being dictated by whims, moods and our behaviour is easily derailed from the human and Christian path.

This disorder is vividly described in *Furrow*. It is about a person who is committed to living the Christian vocation to the full, who is going through a situation where it is difficult to master the sentiments.

²³⁶ Saint Josemaría, *Christ is Passing By*, no. 108. Also see no. 146.

²³⁷ See CCC, 1762.

²³⁸ Points from preaching (AGP, P10, no. 18).

²³⁹ CCC, 1767.

²⁴⁰ Saint Josemaría, *Letter*, 24.10.1965, no.28.

In your life, there are two things that do not fit together: your head and your heart. Your intelligence — enlightened by faith — shows you the way clearly. It can also point out the difference between following that way heroically or blindly. Above all, it places before you the divine greatness and beauty of the undertakings the Trinity leaves in our hands.

Your feelings, on the other hand, become attached to everything you despise, even while you consider it despicable. It seems as if a thousand trifles were awaiting the least opportunity, and as soon as your poor will is weakened, through physical tiredness or lack of supernatural outlook, those little things pile up and excite your imagination, until they form a mountain that oppresses and discourages you. Things such as the rough edges of your work, your resistance to obedience; the lack of proper means; the will-o'-the-wisp attractions of an easy life; greater or smaller repugnant temptations; bouts of over-sentimentality; tiredness; the bitter taste of spiritual mediocrity... And sometimes also fear; fear because you know God wants you to be a saint, and you are not a saint.

Allow me to talk to you bluntly. You have more than enough “reasons” to turn back, and you lack the resolution to correspond to the grace that He grants you, since He has called you to be another Christ, *ipse Christus!* — Christ himself. You have forgotten the Lord’s admonition to the Apostle: “My grace is enough for you!”, which is confirmation that, if you want to, you can.²⁴¹

If we give too much importance to sentiments we fall into the illness in the Christian life called sentimentalism. The sentiments then take over our behaviour, destroying the order of reason and faith. The remedy is not to suppress or neutralise the sentiments – that would be like removing an essential organ, - but to combat their unruliness. A holy human heart can pray: ‘I don’t ask you to take away my feelings, Lord, because I can use them to serve you with: but I ask you to put them through the crucible.’²⁴² St Josemaría also offered some advice that came from the richness of his own experience:

May you be upright because you struggle, trying to reconcile the two brothers we have inside us; the intelligence with the grace of God, and sensuality. These brothers are inside us from birth and they accompany us throughout our lives. We should try to get the two to co-exist even though they may clash, trying to get the superior brother, the intellect, to lead the inferior one, the senses, along with it. Our soul, by the dictate of faith and intelligence and with the help of God’s grace, aspire to better gifts, to paradise, to eternal happiness. So we lead the little brother, sensuality, there too, so that it may enjoy God in heaven.²⁴³

The inspirations of the Holy Spirit in the intellect and the will help us submit the sentiments, or affects, to reason, so that they don’t make it difficult for us to know the

²⁴¹ Saint Josemaría, *Furrow*, no. 166.

²⁴² Saint Josemaría, *Forge*, no. 750.

²⁴³ Points from a meditation, June 1972 (AGP, P09, p. 181). My translation. From the context it is clear that Saint Josemaría uses the term sensuality as equivalent to sensibility to designate in general the tendencies of the sensitive appetite.

good and attain it, but actually help. The 'good sentiments' give us perception so we can work out what we need to do, and energy to do it.

The Gospels show the feelings of Jesus: they tell us of his compassion for the sick, of his pain for those who ignore and err, of his anger at hypocrisy; Jesus weeps over Lazarus' death, gets angry with the merchants who desecrate the temple, he allows his heart be moved in the face the pain of Naím's widow. These are just a few examples that highlight the role of feelings in the Lord's life and, as a consequence, in that of a child of God. The Christian must seek to have "the same feelings of Christ Jesus" (Phil 2.5; cf. Phil 3:15) if he wants to be identified with Him. Not because identification consists of equal feelings, but because they indisputably contribute to using our freedom to love God and others, which is the essence of holiness or identification with Jesus Christ²⁴⁴.

Character Building

The reason and will can play a role in our feelings arising. For instance, one can voluntarily remember something that makes us angry, but sense perception also influences them, from experiences like success or failure, health problems, tiredness, a joy or disappointment, etc. More permanent things like character or temperament also play a role.

All of these factors are important. We can exaggerate their importance, for instance, in thinking feelings are essential in the prayer or interior life, or we can let them lead us, for instance discouragement or lack of enthusiasm can lead us to neglect our duties. We can also underestimate them forgetting that we are body and soul – also in our interior life. St Josemaría teaches us to value all of the sentiments in a balanced way which comes from understanding the human person in light of the mystery of the Incarnation. This is expressed well in two points of *The Way*:

Physical collapse. You are worn out. Rest. Stop that exterior activity. Consult a doctor. Obey, and don't worry. You will soon return to your normal life and, if you are faithful, to new intensity in your apostolate.²⁴⁵

So you couldn't care less? Don't try to fool yourself. This very moment, if I were to ask you about certain people and undertakings in which for God's love you put your soul, I know that you would answer me eagerly, with the interest of one speaking of what is his own. It's not true that you don't care. It's just that you're not tireless, and that you need more time for yourself: time that will also be for your activities since, after all, you are the instrument.²⁴⁶

Character plays a special role in the genesis of the sentiments, so character formation is important. 'Character' means, in broad terms, a person's set of psychological characteristics that partly depend on temperament and partly on the formation one has

²⁴⁴ E. Burkhart, J. López, *Vida cotidiana y santidad en la enseñanzas de San Josemaría*, vol.II, 234-235.

²⁴⁵ Saint Josemaría, *The Way*, no. 706.

²⁴⁶ Saint Josemaría, *The Way*, no. 723.

assimilated and the factors that have influenced it in social, family and other circumstances within one's experience.

Depending on their character, people can be more or less thoughtful, active, passionate, impulsive, apathetic, reserved, open, etc. In practice no one is just one or the other. There are nuances, and it isn't helpful to put people in boxes according to one dominant or more obvious aspect of their character. Furthermore, the grace of God and the effort to acquire virtues mould our character, conferring 'the smooth and regular finish, the firm flexibility of charity, of perfection?'²⁴⁷ A finish that is unique and unrepeatable in each person.

For St Josemaría, among the characteristics that a child of God should look for is that of a 'balanced character'.²⁴⁸ This balance allows for diversity in ways of being:

You have to be different from one another, as the saints in heaven are different, each having his own personal and special characteristics. But also as alike one another as the saints, who would not be saints if each of them had not identified himself with Christ.²⁴⁹

The aim of character building/formation is that each one achieves balance, or harmony among the positive aspects of their character. In the first chapter of *The Way*, he refers to the need for character building as fundamental for the spiritual life. 'Don't say: 'That's the way I'm made... it's my character'. It's your lack of character.'²⁵⁰

Character building requires self-knowledge. 'Each of us can look at ourselves to see whether we are or are not the instruments God wants us to be.'²⁵¹ He is not talking here about a psychological self-analysis, but a sincere encounter with Christ, seeing ourselves in him,²⁵² in personal prayer, and with the help of spiritual direction, to come to be *ipse Christus*.

From self-knowledge we can move to practising the virtues, especially the ones that each of us might need to attain a balanced character, and then to order the sentiments according to reason and the will. Fortitude and temperance are especially important, with their related virtues that perfect the sense faculties.

St Josemaría's teaching on balanced character, harmonising/integrating the sentiments, will and reason through the practice of Christian virtues, is an antidote against the character corrosion produced by sentimentalism or duty-based ethics²⁵³. The teaching leads to the formation of free men and women, in the image of Christ, with a lively awareness of the treasure of the freedom of the children of God.

²⁴⁷ Saint Josemaría, *The Way*, no. 20.

²⁴⁸ Saint Josemaría, *Furrow*, no. 417.

²⁴⁹ Saint Josemaría, *The Way*, no. 947.

²⁵⁰ Saint Josemaría, *The Way*, no. 4.

²⁵¹ Points taken from a meditation, 2 October 1962 (AGP, P09, p. 60).

²⁵² Saint Josemaría, *Christ is Passing By*, no. 107.

²⁵³ C. Ortiz de Landazuri, "La reencarnación innovadora del carácter en Camino, Surco y Forja", in AA.VV. *Tres Estudios sobre el pensamiento de san Josemaría*, (Pamplona: Cuadernos de Anuario Filosófico, 2002), 79-115.

A conclusion to these considerations on the role of the faculties of the soul in the exercise of freedom, we can say that freedom of a child of God is more or less depending on the greater or lesser harmony between the will, reason and sentiments. And this harmony depends on charity, on the knowledge of the truth and the development of the moral virtues.

All of this is covered by charity which implies knowledge of the truth, an upright will, and mastery of the passions. As Aquinas put it, 'the more charity, the more freedom'.²⁵⁴

Perfect charity and complete knowledge of the truth are only found in heaven. Freedom can reach its fulfilment only in the beatific vision. For now, in this life, the level of freedom depends on loving knowledge of God: on contemplation. The intrinsic relationship between Christian freedom, charity and knowledge of the truth, allows us to say that the more contemplative we are the freer we are.

I will release you from captivity, wherever you may be (Jr 29:14).. ' We shake off slavery, through prayer: we know we are free, borne on the wings of a lover's nuptial song, a canticle of love, which makes us want never to be parted from God. It is a new mode of going about this earth, a mode that is divine, supernatural, marvellous. ... One gladly accepts the need to work in this world and for many years, ... freely: *in libertatem gloriae filiorum Dei, qua libertate Christus nos liberavit*; with the freedom of the children of God which Jesus won for us by dying on the tree of the Cross.²⁵⁵

There are other factors that can also influence our decisions such as the state of health and rest.

Character formation requires self-knowledge and then, proceed to the practice of virtues, particularly fortitude and temperance.

The intellect must direct feelings and dominate them. Our Father insisted that we often need to 'go against the grain'. But at the same time that the happiness of heaven is for those who have been happy on earth; therefore optimism. However, joy is more than a feeling.

St Josemaría teaches to value sentimental factors in their proper measure, without exaggerating or underestimating. It is not about uniformity: the variety of characters is richness, but all must be conforming to Christ. We need to seek harmony between feelings, will and reason to be truly free.

Human Weakness

The experience of freedom is universal: we decide, think, move, go whenever we want. Very often, though, someone who makes up his mind to do something slightly difficult doesn't do it. A man makes a firm decision to stop smoking or go on a diet, will spend time jogging, although a new language – and he doesn't.

²⁵⁴ Aquinas, *In III Sent.*, d. 29, a. 8, q1a. 3, s.c.

²⁵⁵ Points from a meditation, 26.11.1967, (AGP, P09, p. 79); Saint Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 297-99.

It happens all the time. It's not that we've changed our minds or no longer want to do whatever it is. We just don't do it.²⁵⁶

We haven't lost a freedom. But some sort of obscure and not wanting horizons -arises – a free experience, so to speak, of failure of the will. Someone here is all someone who smokes after resolving to quit or he doesn't live up to his diet is aware of freely contradicting himself. Except for pathological cases of lack of will, the person could do what he proposed, but he just doesn't want to. He brother contradict himself really. This is an experience of internal breakdown, of human weakness, of willing and not willing. It's as if something were broken inside.

Such human weakness doesn't take away our freedom but disrupted. It is the weakness of a being who remains free. Will wake, but some let themselves be carried further than others, as some react immediately and others don't. The same person has times when he gives in easily and fails at everything, and times when he fights and triumphs, though never completely.

Weaknesses bothersome, even humiliating. It has no cure or except overcoming it each time he comes up.

Since every free action of a person leaves a trace, weakness increases whenever we deal and decreases whenever we conquer. A history of repeated failures can lead to the loss of liberty. In some areas this is quite clear: e.g. drug or alcohol addiction. In others is not as obvious but just as real: e.g. the slovenly lifestyle some people gradually adopt. Boring from within like some sort of insect will worm, witness undermines interior freedom. It takes away the strength to do as we were. If we let it grow, it would destroy us in the end.

Three sources of weakness

What makes us weak? What makes us do what we don't intend – or keeps us from doing what we meant to do? The causes are within us and, with slight variations, at the same in everyone. We do what we didn't want to do when we let ourselves be carried away by goods to which were attracted in a disorderly fashion – in the wrong way, at the wrong time, to the wrong extent. As for not doing what we should, if it has an even simpler interior explanation – we don't like effort, where lazy. Excessive love for goods and laziness are, then, exterior causes for our weakness but there is another, external cause: pressure from the culture. Such pressure affects our freedom, leading us to do what we did not desire, or not do what we wanted to do. Social pressure can have a beneficial educational effect, teaching us to behave like the rest of repressing eccentric, antisocial behaviour; but in other cases it has a noxious influence, moving us to act contrary to what conscience tells us.

Let us look more clearly at these three sources of weakness: the disproportionate attraction of goods, laziness in regard to duties, and social pressure.

One attraction to goods is proper and desirable in that it helps us sequence that improve us. But often goods attract a small and is proper, misleading us regarding

²⁵⁶ J. L. Lorda, *Beyond Good Intentions: The Art of Christian Living*, (New York: Scepter, 2013), Chapter 4.

what they offer, and giving rise to excessive expectations. We become fixed on them, even obsessive.

In some cases instincts impel us towards primary goods with disproportionate passion, moving us to desire them as or when they shouldn't be desired. Vast goods like food, drink, sex, comfort, and health can at times have an almost irresistible attraction. In other cases, disorder lies in a liking for other goods, like work, money, social status, all sports. Having become very attractive, they take command of her feelings, so that we love them passionately and are unable to judge them objectively, while they distort conscience and cause us to be easily carried away.

Whenever we yield to disorder, a pre-existing weakness is reinforced. Love grows more disordered, we become more accustomed to gilding, a strength diminishes. Even as the desire for something money, drugs, sex, food, comfort increases, a satisfaction in having it decreases, while rash decisions become more likely.

All but the highest goods can be loved to excess, beyond reasonable measure. A disordered passion can develop for prestige, work, music, sports, collecting, or any other good. Some, such as gambling, alcohol, and drugs, are especially strong. To make correct decisions, we need to control the disproportionate attraction of goods and the accompanying disordered passions. That means strict observance of right order. Lacking that, someone who does not control his or her passions becomes, as it were, the puppet of his or her desires.

Two other sources of internal weakness are laziness. This is the reluctance to make the effort to comply with obligations. Here is the cause of so many excuses, delays, concessions, and work done poorly. It is common, especially when fulfilling duty is difficult, involving few satisfactions and much monotony. Starting and finishing a job are moments of particular vulnerability.

Laziness has degrees. Some people are lazier than others. But even always is closely tied to a person's ability to overcome laziness. Nothing much will be accomplished otherwise.

Often this defect is not taken as seriously as it should be. It seems inoffensive. Surely not doing something good isn't as serious as doing something bad? But laziness is the cause of endless injustices. People in authority do not intervene to prevent evils or injustices. Evils are not provided or required services. Teachers do not teach what they should. Bureaucratic processes drag on forever, cease to operate, productivity declines.

Ambition and self-interest, but though by no means necessarily admirable, do tend to militate against laziness. Laziness therefore is more likely to appear in regard to what should be disinterested activities: helping others, volunteer services, and the like. It is particularly strong in bureaucratic settings where people get paid whether they do their jobs or not. By contrast, those who have to please clients or customers have an incentive for working.

Classic economic liberalism holds that the promise of personal benefit is the only cure for this human tendency, and the evidence is that there is something to be said for

this. A good salary, for instance, maybe more of an incentive to give good service than about one a bad one. If used intelligently, the principle of self-interest can overcome laziness and lead to better services.

On the other hand, Christian morality holds that the true corrective of laziness – and the only truly noble one -is a spirit of service: commitment to direct one's personal activity to the service of others. Without denying the need to take service self-interest into consideration, we must recognise that society should be governed by moral principles property him indignity. Exclusive reliance on self-interest would be appropriate to a colony of rats. The inclination to seek the good for oneself is natural, but this tendency must be moderated through education to allow for the recognition of duty. We need to learn to do our duty, overcoming the resistance of laziness, and must teach young people to love the ideal of life or something good.

Besides these two int sources of weakness, there is a third arising from social pressure or peer pressure. It is also called human respect and fear of ridicule. It makes us more timid, causes us to shape our behaviour to see the opinions of others for fear of during their disapproval.

While pressure from without is generally ill defined and rather impersonal not the purposeful Croatian people do respond to a unlike fear for respect unlike fear or respect for law and authority, this is a response to unwritten law is an unrecognised authorities and often dominate us without her realizing it.

Everyone is affected this way. We think alike dresser like share the same ideals and daemons believe that everybody, believe that what everybody says he's good is good, and what everybody says he's baddies bad: everybody does it, everybody thinks this way.

This pressure can be seen at work in large numbers of people and small groups. Croatian from this source causes us to laugh at jokes the defender believes them to be ashamed of our principles, or religion, or race, are origin, a profession, a family, or are friends. But the work year is fear of not fitting in, been pointed out and singled out, becoming the butt of jokes or the object of content, being left alone and isolated. Resisting this pressure means more than just sloughing off convention so as to draw attention to oneself there may be good reasons why people already in the same direction, and are systematically contrarian response would be stupid. But sometimes there are no good reasons. Then we must stand up against uniformity and fads to defend our freedom.

The effort to overcome weakness

Weakness in its three manifestations he's an inseparable part of life. Overcoming it requires the sporting approach – a sustained effort to improve one's performance. And that involves conquering the falls attractions that, entering the imagination, can take control of the mind.

Someone who wants to diet must avoid thinking about food all day, along with the occasions that give rise to such thoughts him. It would be stupid to keep an open box of chocolates constantly at hand. This common sense principle is called fleeing the

occasion. And what is true of dieting is true in every field, from sobriety to fidelity in marriage. A passion not dominated Canadian time to great injustices, great misfortunes, and great remorse. Made romanticism may well end in tragedy. When people are younger and more naïve, they tend to look askance at the fleeing at the idea of fleeing and avoiding the occasions. Isn't as cowardly? Wouldn't brave resistance be better? But those who think this way lack experience in the depth of human weakness all the strength they can muster may not be enough to vanquish a temptation.

Disordered passion is bested by not allowing it to grow, not committing it to seize control of the imagination, keeping at bay, and appearing at offences when they've been reached. Breached. It's often helpful training to deny ourselves what our feelings request, even though it be something good: not leaving were drinking all we want, not satisfy curiosity, avoiding comfort, saying no to unnecessary expenditures, keeping to a schedule, doing the most important thing first even if we dislike doing it.

The point isn't to practice self-denial in everything always, but to do so in reasonable measure and sometimes when we failed on another occasion a little bit more. The habit of limiting oneself, and tightening up to recover what has been lost, indicates the feelings of intense feelings protects freedom not only disorderly passions directed to various goods but other manifestations of weakness – laziness and human respect - require similar treatment. Although people who were naïve don't believe it, conquering the enemy requires clever use of our limited resources. It is very difficult to language laziness and human respect if we entered if we entertain their arguments, let them fill our minds, permit them to weaken and Rivers are decisions. Instead we must immediately to what we've seen needs doing, with excuses, second thoughts, and unplanned delays.

The fight against weakness can be summed up in this: to be hard on oneself. Not harsh, as a deranged person, but hard, with the studied and balanced hardness of a professional athlete bent on winning.

In this way we acquire habits of conquering ourselves by overcoming disordered passions, laziness, and social pressure. Such stable habits are virtues. They protect freedom, and help us do good, making life productive and beautiful.

This includes moderating the excess attraction of goods or expressions of temperance. To temper something is to regulate it, making it desirable, give it balance and serenity. This is just what happens in establishing border between feelings and duties. Under the heading of temperance, sobriety limits food and drink, and chastity control sexual desire.

Other things must also be ordered we need to set limits to the desire to work, to prosper, to engage in hobbies and sports – everything that attracts us to excess. To be truly human, or must be governed by the measure of what is reasonable.

The virtue by which we vanquish interior difficulties, laziness and social pressure is called fortitude. It is the capacity to force oneself to confront difficulties and overcome them. Fortitude comes into play not only in dramatic situations involving matters of great importance but also in regard to everyday things – punctuality, personal

grooming, taking or making corrections, working steadily. Courage is required to lead a good life.

A life spent making demands on oneself may sound tedious, but this is an excellent and beautiful way to live. Life inevitably is filled with strife and effort, and without effort of the sort described here, there is no freedom in it. The struggle to repress evil is basic but more is required. A fundamental struggle of the moral life consists in discovering and loving higher goods, for herein lies the strength to draw on the energies of freedom.

The traces of original sin

As a result of original sin, human nature is weakened in its powers, subject to ignorance, suffering and the domination of death, and inclined to sin. CCC, 418.

Human weakness is not the superficial wound. It goes so deep that man can be called a deeply damaged being. The mysterious inconsistency deep within us prevents us from being what we should.

Superficial cures for disastrously short of correcting the problem. Cravings for primary goods dominate us. Laziness persists. Disorder sprouts and grows. People sometimes suppose that factual knowledge, clear thinking, and correct decisions would do the job. But the experience of individuals and nations all through history suggests otherwise. Modern science has not the limited modern science has not eliminated the absurdity of life, and at times have witnessed atrocities with no equal in prior history in magnitude, intensity, and the number of people's affected.

Obviously something is broken in the human person. But Christian teaching goes further and speaks of a mystery, the mystery of original sin, a congenital vice their damages the human condition. A nature is wounded from the beginning.

This scene of origin is a mystery, something hard to understand and accept. But without it there is no explaining what happens to man, well within the mystery is eliminated and easy ways to deal with it. As Pascal Sears, man is more incomprehensible without this mystery than the mystery itself is incomprehensible to man.

Original sin is not just a design for like a physical deformity. It is a moral wound that affects our relationship with what is true and good. It is a strange and persistent inclination toward not doing what we should, and doing what we should not: absurd, illogical, unreasonable – are real and persistent.

Christian tradition, describing the permanent effects of original sin, speaks of ruptures with God, within ourselves, with other people, and with nature.

The rupture with God can be seen in our difficulty to enter into contact with him. What we are able to know of God is diminished as compared to before original sin and we have the strange tendency to flee from him.

The internal rupture of the human person shows itself in various ways: the ease with which we deceive ourselves about what we need to do, the lack of coherence between spirit and feelings, the readiness of the latter to override the will and conscience, and the impotence of the will when it comes to imposing and executing its decisions. All these problems come together in conscience.

Original sin is manifested also in divisions among men. Misunderstanding seems to proliferate the closer people are to one another. Relationships among relatives and neighbours are easily poisoned. People take perverse pleasure in making life difficult for others. Forgiving is difficult and we sometimes seek revenge. These tendencies are acted out on a vast scale all through history. Scriptures iconic representation of this tendency is the tower of Babel, where language itself became an instrument for separating people.

Finally, there is a rupture between man and the whole of nature. Nature can, at times, appear inhospitable and threatening. Sickness, pain, and death are universal realities of human experience.

These four ruptures are not mere shortcomings. They have a malignant dimension, an element of perversity – a profound distortion of reality, an inversion of truth, goodness, and beauty.

The world, it appears, is alarmingly open to these manifestations of perversion. Scripture calls the devil the lord of the world and father of lies, and his influence cannot be excluded as the explanation of some historical events and deeds. Human weakness is not the only destructive force at work shaping history.

Christian doctrine teaches that these four ruptures render us incapable of doing all the good we should do by our own power. Without special help from God we cannot be faithful to our conscience. This help has a name, grace, meaning a free gift of God. Grace is the strength of God acting inside us, helping us introduce the order of intelligence into her feelings and behaviour, and moving us to be faithful to God's will.

It is a mysterious reality with power to transform human life. The Church has a rich experience of such transformations.

Moral wisdom is acquired only with the help of grace. Only with God's assistance can we acquire sound moral knowledge, right desires that reject selfishness and move us to love God and neighbour, and power to overcome our weakness.

Perfection is beyond our reach in this life, but Christians believe it will be in fact attained in the end, when all things are incorporated into Christ. Meanwhile we must strive as athletes do, seek God's grace, and look for it where he has placed it – in those mysterious channels of grace called the sacraments, where the Church recapitulates the mysteries of Christ's life and death.

Factors that can hinder freedom

1. Freedom and illness
2. Feelings of inferiority
3. Concern for human respect

4. Compulsive independence
5. Conventionalism
6. Prejudices
7. Rancour
8. Duty complex
9. Self-indulgence
10. Bad habits
11. Shyness

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Catechism of the Catholic Church

THE VIRTUES

1803 "Whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things."

A virtue is an habitual and firm disposition to do the good. It allows the person not only to perform good acts, but to give the best of himself. The virtuous person tends toward the good with all his sensory and spiritual powers; he pursues the good and chooses it in concrete actions. The goal of a virtuous life is to become like God.

I. The Human Virtues

1804 Human virtues are firm attitudes, stable dispositions, habitual perfections of intellect and will that govern our actions, order our passions, and guide our conduct according to reason and faith. They make possible ease, self-mastery, and joy in leading a morally good life. The virtuous man is he who freely practices the good.

The moral virtues are acquired by human effort. They are the fruit and seed of morally good acts; they dispose all the powers of the human being for communion with divine love.

The cardinal virtues

1805 Four virtues play a pivotal role and accordingly are called "cardinal"; all the others are grouped around them. They are: prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance. "If anyone loves righteousness, [Wisdom's] labors are virtues; for she teaches temperance and prudence, justice, and courage." These virtues are praised under other names in many passages of Scripture.

1806 Prudence is the virtue that disposes practical reason to discern our true good in every circumstance and to choose the right means of achieving it; "the prudent man looks where he is going." "Keep sane and sober for your prayers." Prudence is "right reason in action," writes St. Thomas Aquinas, following Aristotle. It is not to be confused with timidity or fear, nor with duplicity or dissimulation. It is called *auriga virtutum* (the charioteer of the virtues); it guides the other virtues by setting rule and measure. It is prudence that immediately guides the judgment of conscience. The prudent man determines and directs his conduct in accordance with this judgment. With the help of this virtue we apply moral principles to particular cases without error and overcome doubts about the good to achieve and the evil to avoid.

1807 Justice is the moral virtue that consists in the constant and firm will to give their due to God and neighbor. Justice toward God is called the "virtue of religion." Justice toward men disposes one to respect the rights of each and to establish in human relationships the harmony that promotes equity with regard to persons and to the common good. The just man, often mentioned in the Sacred Scriptures, is distinguished by habitual right thinking and the uprightness of his conduct toward his neighbor. "You shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great, but in righteousness shall you judge your neighbor." "Masters, treat your slaves justly and fairly, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven."

1808 Fortitude is the moral virtue that ensures firmness in difficulties and constancy in the pursuit of the good. It strengthens the resolve to resist temptations and to overcome obstacles

in the moral life. the virtue of fortitude enables one to conquer fear, even fear of death, and to face trials and persecutions. It disposes one even to renounce and sacrifice his life in defense of a just cause. "The Lord is my strength and my song." "In the world you have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

1809 Temperance is the moral virtue that moderates the attraction of pleasures and provides balance in the use of created goods. It ensures the will's mastery over instincts and keeps desires within the limits of what is honorable. the temperate person directs the sensitive appetites toward what is good and maintains a healthy discretion: "Do not follow your inclination and strength, walking according to the desires of your heart." Temperance is often praised in the Old Testament: "Do not follow your base desires, but restrain your appetites." In the New Testament it is called "moderation" or "sobriety." We ought "to live sober, upright, and godly lives in this world."

To live well is nothing other than to love God with all one's heart, with all one's soul and with all one's efforts; from this it comes about that love is kept whole and uncorrupted (through temperance). No misfortune can disturb it (and this is fortitude). It obeys only (God) (and this is justice), and is careful in discerning things, so as not to be surprised by deceit or trickery (and this is prudence).

The virtues and grace

1810 Human virtues acquired by education, by deliberate acts and by a perseverance ever-renewed in repeated efforts are purified and elevated by divine grace. With God's help, they *Forge* character and give facility in the practice of the good. the virtuous man is happy to practice them.

1811 It is not easy for man, wounded by sin, to maintain moral balance. Christ's gift of salvation offers us the grace necessary to persevere in the pursuit of the virtues. Everyone should always ask for this grace of light and strength, frequent the sacraments, cooperate with the Holy Spirit, and follow his calls to love what is good and shun evil.

II. The Theological Virtues

1812 The human virtues are rooted in the theological virtues, which adapt man's faculties for participation in the divine nature: for the theological virtues relate directly to God. They dispose Christians to live in a relationship with the Holy Trinity. They have the One and Triune God for their origin, motive, and object.

1813 The theological virtues are the foundation of Christian moral activity; they animate it and give it its special character. They inform and give life to all the moral virtues. They are infused by God into the souls of the faithful to make them capable of acting as his children and of meriting eternal life. They are the pledge of the presence and action of the Holy Spirit in the faculties of the human being. There are three theological virtues: faith, hope, and charity.

Faith

1814 Faith is the theological virtue by which we believe in God and believe all that he has said and revealed to us, and that Holy Church proposes for our belief, because he is truth itself. By faith "man freely commits his entire self to God."⁷⁸ For this reason the believer seeks to know and do God's will. "The righteous shall live by faith." Living faith "work(s) through charity."

1815 The gift of faith remains in one who has not sinned against it. But "faith apart from works is dead": when it is deprived of hope and love, faith does not fully unite the believer to Christ and does not make him a living member of his Body.

1816 The disciple of Christ must not only keep the faith and live on it, but also profess it, confidently bear witness to it, and spread it: "All however must be prepared to confess Christ before men and to follow him along *The Way* of the Cross, amidst the persecutions which the Church never lacks." Service of and witness to the faith are necessary for salvation: "So every one who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven; but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven."

Hope

1817 Hope is the theological virtue by which we desire the kingdom of heaven and eternal life as our happiness, placing our trust in Christ's promises and relying not on our own strength, but on the help of the grace of the Holy Spirit. "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful." "The Holy Spirit . . . he poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that we might be justified by his grace and become heirs in hope of eternal life."

1818 The virtue of hope responds to the aspiration to happiness which God has placed in the heart of every man; it takes up the hopes that inspire men's activities and purifies them so as to order them to the Kingdom of heaven; it keeps man from discouragement; it sustains him during times of abandonment; it opens up his heart in expectation of eternal beatitude. Buoyed up by hope, he is preserved from selfishness and led to the happiness that flows from charity.

1819 Christian hope takes up and fulfills the hope of the chosen people which has its origin and model in the hope of Abraham, who was blessed abundantly by the promises of God fulfilled in Isaac, and who was purified by the test of the sacrifice. "Hoping against hope, he believed, and thus became the father of many nations."

1820 Christian hope unfolds from the beginning of Jesus' preaching in the proclamation of the beatitudes. the beatitudes raise our hope toward heaven as the new Promised Land; they trace the path that leads through the trials that await the disciples of Jesus. But through the merits of Jesus Christ and of his Passion, God keeps us in the "hope that does not disappoint." Hope is the "sure and steadfast anchor of the soul . . . that enters . . . where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf." Hope is also a weapon that protects us in the struggle of salvation: "Let us . . . put on the breastplate of faith and charity, and for a helmet the hope of salvation." It affords us joy even under trial: "Rejoice in your hope, be patient in tribulation." Hope is expressed and nourished in prayer, especially in the Our Father, the summary of everything that hope leads us to desire.

1821 We can therefore hope in the glory of heaven promised by God to those who love him and do his will. In every circumstance, each one of us should hope, with the grace of God, to persevere "to the end" and to obtain the joy of heaven, as God's eternal reward for the good works accomplished with the grace of Christ. In hope, the Church prays for "all men to be saved." She longs to be united with Christ, her Bridegroom, in the glory of heaven:

Hope, O my soul, hope. You know neither the day nor the hour. Watch carefully, for everything passes quickly, even though your impatience makes doubtful what is certain, and turns a very short time into a long one. Dream that the more you struggle, the more you prove the love that you bear your God, and the more you will rejoice one day with your Beloved, in a happiness and rapture that can never end.

Charity

1822 Charity is the theological virtue by which we love God above all things for his own sake, and our neighbor as ourselves for the love of God.

1823 Jesus makes charity the new commandment. By loving his own "to the end," he makes manifest the Father's love which he receives. By loving one another, the disciples imitate the love of Jesus which they themselves receive. Whence Jesus says: "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; abide in my love." and again: "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you."

1824 Fruit of the Spirit and fullness of the Law, charity keeps the commandments of God and his Christ: "Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love."

1825 Christ died out of love for us, while we were still "enemies." The Lord asks us to love as he does, even our enemies, to make ourselves the neighbor of those farthest away, and to love children and the poor as Christ himself.

The Apostle Paul has given an incomparable depiction of charity: "charity is patient and kind, charity is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Charity does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Charity bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things."

1826 "If I . . . have not charity," says the Apostle, "I am nothing." Whatever my privilege, service, or even virtue, "if I . . . have not charity, I gain nothing." Charity is superior to all the virtues. It is the first of the theological virtues: "So faith, hope, charity abide, these three. But the greatest of these is charity."

1827 The practice of all the virtues is animated and inspired by charity, which "binds everything together in perfect harmony"; it is the form of the virtues; it articulates and orders them among themselves; it is the source and the goal of their Christian practice. Charity upholds and purifies our human ability to love, and raises it to the supernatural perfection of divine love.

1828 The practice of the moral life animated by charity gives to the Christian the spiritual freedom of the children of God. He no longer stands before God as a slave, in servile fear, or as a mercenary looking for wages, but as a son responding to the love of him who "first loved us":

If we turn away from evil out of fear of punishment, we are in the position of slaves. If we pursue the enticement of wages, . . . we resemble mercenaries. Finally if we obey for the sake of the good itself and out of love for him who commands . . . we are in the position of children.

1829 The fruits of charity are joy, peace, and mercy; charity demands beneficence and fraternal correction; it is benevolence; it fosters reciprocity and remains disinterested and generous; it is friendship and communion:

Love is itself the fulfillment of all our works. There is the goal; that is why we run: we run toward it, and once we reach it, in it we shall find rest.

III. The Gifts and Fruits of the Holy Spirit

1830 The moral life of Christians is sustained by the gifts of the Holy Spirit. These are permanent dispositions which make man docile in following the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

1831 The seven gifts of the Holy Spirit are wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord. They belong in their fullness to Christ, Son of David. They complete and perfect the virtues of those who receive them. They make the faithful docile in readily obeying divine inspirations.

Let your good spirit lead me on a level path.

For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God . . . If children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ.

1832 The fruits of the Spirit are perfections that the Holy Spirit forms in us as the first fruits of eternal glory. the tradition of the Church lists twelve of them: "charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, generosity, gentleness, faithfulness, modesty, self-control, chastity."

1833 Virtue is a habitual and firm disposition to do good.

1834 The human virtues are stable dispositions of the intellect and the will that govern our acts, order our passions, and guide our conduct in accordance with reason and faith. They can be grouped around the four cardinal virtues: prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance.

1835 Prudence disposes the practical reason to discern, in every circumstance, our true good and to choose the right means for achieving it.

1836 Justice consists in the firm and constant will to give God and neighbor their due.

1837 Fortitude ensures firmness in difficulties and constancy in the pursuit of the good.

1838 Temperance moderates the attraction of the pleasures of the senses and provides balance in the use of created goods.

1839 The moral virtues grow through education, deliberate acts, and perseverance in struggle. Divine grace purifies and elevates them.

1840 The theological virtues dispose Christians to live in a relationship with the Holy Trinity. They have God for their origin, their motive, and their object - God known by faith, God hoped in and loved for his own sake.

1841 There are three theological virtues: faith, hope, and charity. They inform all the moral virtues and give life to them.

1842 By faith, we believe in God and believe all that he has revealed to us and that Holy Church proposes for our belief.

1843 By hope we desire, and with steadfast trust await from God, eternal life and the graces to merit it.

1844 By charity, we love God above all things and our neighbor as ourselves for love of God. Charity, the form of all the virtues, "*binds everything together in perfect harmony*" (Col 3:14).

1845 The seven gifts of the Holy Spirit bestowed upon Christians are wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord.

Chapter 4: Conditions for the Expansion of Freedom

Woman is stronger than man, and more faithful, in the hour of suffering: Mary of Magdala and Mary Cleophas and Salome! With a group of valiant women like these, closely united to our Lady of Sorrows, what work for souls could be done in the world!²⁵⁷

St. Josemaría understands freedom first and foremost as the freedom to choose good with self-determination: namely the capacity to love, freedom to love. As a demand for this capacity comes the freedom from sin, of slavery to passions, as well as freedom from coercion, from obstacles or external impediments to the exercise of freedom. The freedom from sin and the disorder of passions is related to the practice of virtues²⁵⁸. In this chapter we will look at some external conditions that allow the growth of freedom.

Some currents of thought reduce freedom to freedom from coercion or from oppressive social structures; social and political freedom. The Christian idea of freedom is much more.

Unless one is deprived of one's interiority by psychological torture or other extreme measures, exercising personal freedom, our capacity to love, is possible even in the most adverse and oppressing circumstances.

One can be a prisoner in the most inhumane and degrading cell and be free, accepting the will of God and loving the sacrifice, thinking of all souls. How many martyrs for the faith have flown like eagles, with their body I irons and their soul free to love God without limits.²⁵⁹

An opposing danger, spiritualist in nature, is to focus only on inner freedom and not recognise the importance of external freedom. This approach leads to people not bothering to defend their rights and external freedoms can be easily eroded.

St Josemaría promotes respect for persons and their freedom. For him the gift of freedom requires two conditions for it to flourish in all aspects of life.

(a) The absence of impediments to the legitimate use of freedom, i.e. that there is no unjust coercion on either inner freedom or external activity. Christians should defend and promote both respect for their own freedom and that of others.

²⁵⁷ Saint Josemaría, *The Way*, no. 982.

²⁵⁸ E. Burkhart, J. López, *Vida cotidiana y santidad en la enseñanzas de San Josemaría*, vol. II, 244-245.

²⁵⁹ Points from preaching, 25.6.1972 (AgP, P01 7.1972, p. 9).

Only if he defends the individual freedom of others - with the personal responsibility that must go with it - only then can he defend his own with human and Christian integrity.²⁶⁰

This first condition covers different aspects that we will study when referring to the homily of St Josemaría 'Christian respect for persons and their freedom'.

- (b) That each one assume and maintain the freely accepted commitments to direct the use of one's freedom towards the fulfilment of God's will. For a Christian, it is the baptismal commitments and other commitments that he has taken in order to respond to his personal call to holiness. These commitments are a channel for the expansion of freedom, outside of them freedom does not expand; it is dispersed and lost. Cover this under 'Christian Commitments as a source of freedom'.

Christian respect for persons and their freedom

Homily: "*Christian respect for the person and his freedom*"²⁶¹

- a) Title of the homily: important content on the path of sanctification
- b) It emphasises the first consequence of divine filiation. Ontological truth that requires respect for freedom, within the limits of the human condition. Respect for freedom comes to be like the air a child of God needs to breathe normally²⁶².
- c) The homily seeks to go deeper into the:
 - a. Respect for the freedom of individuals as required by their dignity.
 - b. Respect for the freedom of others on matters of free decisions (opinionable matters).
 - c. Respect for freedom on matters that are not the competency of civil authority (although in themselves they are not opinionable).

Freedom of conscience

'It is inaccurate to speak of freedom of conscience ... I defend with all my strength the freedom of consciences.'²⁶³

The expression "freedom of consciences" of Leo XIII, widely used by Pius XI, is the right of every person not to be obliged to act against his conscience (by physical or moral coercion); the right to respect consciences, to defend them from acting according to their moral conscience.

"I have always defended the freedom of individual consciences. I do not understand violence. I do not consider it a proper way either to persuade or to win over. Error is overcome by prayer, by God's grace, and by study; never by force, always with charity."²⁶⁴

²⁶⁰ Saint Josemaría, *Christ is Passing By*, no. 184.

²⁶¹ Ibid.

²⁶² E. Burkhardt, J. López, *Vida cotidiana y santidad en la enseñanzas de San Josemaría*, vol. 2, 247.

²⁶³ Saint Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 32.

²⁶⁴ Saint Josemaría, *Conversations*, no. 14.

The term "freedom of conscience" was understood as freedom to carry out anything that is decided in conscience, without recognizing an objective moral order established by God. Now days it is expressed with the term 'freedom of consciences'. This implies to help others use their freedom righteously through study, prayer and counsel. Also, to refrain from abusively invading the privacy of others, promoting their freedom in a positive way. Our Father in his spiritual direction used to say 'do not answer me, if you do not want'; "

If my own personal experience is of any help, I can say that I have always seen my work as a priest and shepherd of souls as being aimed at helping each person to face up to all the demands of his life and to discover what God wants from him in particular — without in any way limiting that holy independence and blessed personal responsibility which are the features of a Christian conscience. This way of acting and this spirit are based on respect for the transcendence of revealed truth and on love for the freedom of the human person."²⁶⁵

The personal freedom of a Catholic layperson in these areas is limited only by the law of God and fidelity to the Church. These are not limits but precious gifts that make human actions acts of valuable content, worthy of a child of God.²⁶⁶

Inasmuch as we are members of the Church, each of us has 'fundamental rights, duties and powers within ecclesiastical society related to his juridical status as a *member of the faithful*: active participation in the liturgy, the possibility of cooperating directly in the hierarchy's apostolate, and of offering advice to the hierarchy in its pastoral task. if invited to do so, etc.²⁶⁷

The layman's specific role in the mission of the Church is precisely that of sanctifying secular reality, the temporal order, the world, *ab intra*, in an immediate and direct way.²⁶⁸

they know that this mission comes from the very fact of their being Christians and not necessarily from a mandate from the hierarchy; although obviously they ought to fulfil it in a spirit of union with the hierarchy following the teaching authority of the Church.²⁶⁹

When the value of freedom is fully understood and the divine gift of freedom is passionately loved, the pluralism that freedom brings with it is also loved.²⁷⁰

We do not all think the same way because we admit the greatest possible pluralism in all temporal matters and in debatable theological questions.²⁷¹

"This doctrine of civic freedom, of understanding, of living together in harmony, forms a very important part of the message of Opus Dei."²⁷².

²⁶⁵ Saint Josemaría, *Christ is Passing By*, no. 99.

²⁶⁶ Saint Josemaría, *Letter*, 25.1.1961, no. 41.

²⁶⁷ Saint Josemaría, *Conversations*, no. 9.

²⁶⁸ Saint Josemaría, *Conversations*, no. 9.

²⁶⁹ Saint Josemaría, *Conversations*, no. 59.

²⁷⁰ Saint Josemaría, *Conversations*, no. 98.

²⁷¹ Saint Josemaría, *Conversations*, no. 30.

²⁷² Saint Josemaría, *Conversations*, no. 118.

We need to love freedom. Avoid this abuse we see today, it is evident and is showing up in countries all over the world, that reveals the desire, contrary to the licit independence of humankind, to oblige everyone to join one group in matters of opinion, to create temporal 'dogmas' in temporal things; and to defend these false criteria with scandalous propaganda against those who are too noble to submit.²⁷³

Freedom & pluralism in matters of opinion

"The personal freedom of the Catholic layman in opinionable matters has no limits other than the law of God and fidelity to the Holy Church; these are not limits, but precious gifts, which make of human actions acts of precious content, worthy of a child of God"²⁷⁴. Defending freedom in temporal activities is a key point. Without this freedom, the laity could not carry out their own mission (received from Christ, not by the command of the Hierarchy, but to ordain temporal realities to God). It is a freedom with all its consequences and therefore there must be a legitimate pluralism.

In the moral field, the instructions of the Magisterium must be followed if there is a pronouncement on this. In aspects that refer to science or art, there is a variety of opinions. Even in theology, there's no Opus Dei school. "We do not all think the same way because we admit the greatest possible pluralism in all temporal matters and in debatable theological questions."²⁷⁵. In the field of political opinions: Freedom to opt for one party or another, with the sole and logical binding orientation of the doctrine of the Church.

St Josemaría opposed any totalitarian regime. Even to the temptation to promote the unity of Catholics in politics (as well as in different professional fields), even when it meant to deal with secular and Marxist pressure. St Josemaría defended the pluralism of Christians in politics: "Because there is no single Christian formula for ordering the things of the world"²⁷⁶. "There are no dogmas in temporal things"²⁷⁷. With this attitude, he did not advocate a Christian liberalism, in the sense of separating secular activities from the faith, which would be relegated to piety and theology. St Josemaría strongly pointed out that faith must illuminate temporal problems and that the Christian cannot fail to be so when he is a parliamentarian, a doctor, etc. But the way to do it is in freedom, not through fundamentalism.

Summary:

"A true Christian never thinks that unity in the Faith, fidelity to the teaching authority and tradition of the Church, and concern for the spreading of the saving message of Christ, run counter to the existence of variety in the attitudes of people as regards the things which God has left, as the phrase goes, to the free discussion of men. In fact, he is fully aware that this variety forms part of God's plan. It is something desired by God, who distributes His gifts and His lights as He wishes. The Christian should love other people and therefore

²⁷³ Saint Josemaría, *Letter*, 9.1.1932, no. 1.

²⁷⁴ Saint Josemaría, *Letter*, 25.1.1961, no. 41.

²⁷⁵ Saint Josemaría, *Conversations*, no. 30.

²⁷⁶ Saint Josemaría, *Letter*, 9.1.1959, no. 35.

²⁷⁷ *The Riches of the Faith*, <https://opusdei.org/en-au/article/the-riches-of-the-faith/>

respect opinions contrary to his own, and live in harmony and full brotherhood with people who do not think as he does."²⁷⁸.

The root of respect for freedom is love. The dignity of people demands a love not conditioned by the various convictions in these matters. Thus, we should make a positive assessment of opinionable pluralism. In *Opus Dei*, "the various opinions are and will be a constant proof of that good spirit"²⁷⁹.

Freedom in Civil Society: religious freedom & freedom of God's children

On respect for freedom, in the religious area:

I defend with all my strength the freedom of consciences, which means that no one can licitly prevent a man from worshipping God. The legitimate hunger for truth must be respected. Man has a grave obligation to seek God, to know him and worship him, but no one on earth is permitted to impose on his neighbour the practice of a faith he lacks; just as no one can claim the right to harm those who have received the faith from God.²⁸⁰

no one may violate the freedom of students' consciences. Religion has to be studied voluntarily, even though Christians know that, if they want to live their Faith well, they have a grave obligation to receive a sound religious training.²⁸¹

From the first moment this is the spirit we have lived. You can understand, then, how the Council's teaching on this subject [religious freedom] could only make me happy.²⁸²

"Your task as a Christian citizen is to help see Christ's love and freedom preside over all aspects of modern life: culture and the economy, work and rest, family life and social relations."²⁸³

"You, as a Christian and, perhaps, as a research worker, writer, scientist, politician or labourer... have the duty to sanctify those things. Remember that the whole universe — as the Apostle says — is groaning as in the pangs of labour, awaiting the liberation of the children of God."²⁸⁴

"A man or a society that does not react to suffering and injustice and makes no effort to alleviate them is still distant from the love of Christ's heart. While Christians enjoy the fullest freedom in finding and applying various solutions to these problems, they should be united in having one and the same desire to

²⁷⁸ Saint Josemaría, *Conversations*, no. 67.

²⁷⁹ Saint Josemaría, *Letter*, 11.3.1940, no. 27.

²⁸⁰ Saint Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 32.

²⁸¹ Saint Josemaría, *Conversations*, no. 73.

²⁸² Saint Josemaría, *Conversations*, no. 44.

²⁸³ Saint Josemaría, *Furrow*, no. 302.

²⁸⁴ Saint Josemaría, *Furrow*, no. 311.

serve mankind. Otherwise their Christianity will not be the word and life of Jesus; it will be a fraud, a deception of God and man."²⁸⁵

In relation to the apostolate in general:

"Any form of intolerance, coercion and violence in the dealings with one another must disappear. In apostolic action, better, in apostolic activity – we don't want there the slightest room for coercion. God wants to be served in freedom and therefore an apostolate that did not respect the freedom of consciences would not be right"²⁸⁶

In the Church and in civil society there are no second-class citizens. In the apostolate and in temporal activities, the limitations on the freedom of God's children is unjust and arbitrary. This refers to lack of freedom of consciences and freedom to undertake legitimate initiatives. They are limitations that come from an abuse of authority.²⁸⁷

Parents can, and should, be a great help to their children. They can open new horizons for them, share their experiences and make them reflect, so they do not allow themselves to be carried away by passing emotional experiences. They can offer them a realistic scale of value. ...

Advice does not take away freedom. It gives elements on which to judge and thus enlarges the possibilities of choice and ensures that decisions are not taken on the basis of irrational factors. After hearing the opinions of others and taking everything into consideration, there comes a moment in which a choice has to be made and then no one has the right to force a young person's freedom."²⁸⁸

Always leave people a lots of freedom of spirit. Remember what I have told you many times: 'because I want to' seems to me the most supernatural reason of all. The role of a spiritual director is to help a soul to want, to want to, fulfil the will of God. Don't command, advise... so each person feels their personal freedom and the corresponding responsibility.²⁸⁹

Trying to impose dogmas in temporal affairs leads one inevitably to do violence to other people's consciences, to fail to respect one's neighbor... Christians have to combine their passion for civic and social progress with an awareness that their own opinions are limited, and hence they have to respect other people's opinions and love legitimate pluralism.²⁹⁰

'Spiritual unity is compatible with variety in temporal matters when extremism and intolerance are shunned.'²⁹¹

²⁸⁵ Saint Josemaría, *Christ is Passing By*, no. 167.

²⁸⁶ Saint Josemaría, *Letter*, 9.1.1932, no. 66.

²⁸⁷ Saint Josemaría, *Letter*, 11.3.1940, no. 65.

²⁸⁸ Saint Josemaría, *Conversations*, no. 104.

²⁸⁹ Saint Josemaría, *Letter*, 8.8.1956, no. 38.

²⁹⁰ *The Riches of the Faith*, <https://opusdei.org/en-au/article/the-riches-of-the-faith/>

²⁹¹ Saint Josemaría, *Conversations*, no. 67.

A true Christian never thinks that unity in the Faith, fidelity to the teaching authority and tradition of the Church, and concern for the spreading of the saving message of Christ, run counter to the existence of variety in the attitudes of people as regards the things which God has left, as the phrase goes, to the free discussion of men. In fact, he is fully aware that this variety forms part of God's plan. It is something desired by God, who distributes His gifts and His lights as He wishes. The Christian should love other people and therefore respect opinions contrary to his own, and live in harmony and full brotherhood with people who do not think as he does.²⁹²

'Respect for freedom is rooted in love. If other people think differently from me, is that any reason for us to be enemies?'²⁹³

Holy intransigence, holy coercion and holy shamelessness

Respect for freedom is an essential premise to understand the expressions in *The Way*, n. 387: holy intransigence, holy coercion and holy shamelessness.

There is a hermeneutic error to interpret it as coercion or intransigence "for holy reasons". We find other texts of St Josemaría providing explanation of these expressions:

The standard of holiness that God asks of us is determined by these three points: Holy intransigence, holy coercion and holy shamelessness.²⁹⁴

- a) Holy intransigence consists in maintaining and confessing the truths of faith as a whole.

"By the grace of God, who brought us to be born to his Church by baptism, we know that there is but a true religion, and on that point we do not yield, we are uncompromising: holy and uncompromising. Will there be anyone with common sense – I often tell you – who will give in to something as simple as the sum of two plus two? Can you concede two and two to be three and a half? The compromise – in the doctrine of faith – is a sure sign of not having the truth, or of not knowing that it is possessed"²⁹⁵

This is not opposed to respect for freedom, but it's a rejection of relativism. One seeks to defend the truth in charity, to expose the truth with charity.

"When we Catholics defend and uphold the truth, without making concessions, we have to strive to create an atmosphere of charity, of harmony, to drown all hatred and resentment"²⁹⁶.

²⁹² Saint Josemaría, *Conversations*, no. 67.

²⁹³ *The Riches of the Faith*, <https://opusdei.org/en-au/article/the-riches-of-the-faith/>

²⁹⁴ Saint Josemaría, *The Way*, no. 387.

²⁹⁵ Saint Josemaría, *Letter*, 16.7.1933, no. 7.

²⁹⁶ Saint Josemaría, *Forge*, no. 564.

Error does not only darken the understanding: it also sunders wills. But *veritas liberabit vos*: the truth will set you free from the partisan spirit that dries up charity.²⁹⁷

We are friends of freedom. Our entire apostolate has this basis, and in a very special way the apostolate '*ad fidem*', for which we feel a predilection. Faith cannot be imposed with hammers: God's grace and human freedom must cooperate in intimate harmony. That has nothing to do with indifferentism or a certain subjectivist relativism.²⁹⁸

Nor can we put the defence and respect for freedom of St Josemaría in parallel with the currents that reduce coexistence to the 'opinionability' of any question, and affirm that defending the truth would mean a totalitarian, simplistic attitude. St. Josemaría sustained all the dogmas of the Church and did not think at all that the possession of the truth would lead to violence or intolerance. He taught to be uncompromising with the truth and understanding with people.

- b) The holy coercion refers to the apostolate: The '*compelle intrare*' (Lk 14:23) was understood literally in the fight against heresies since the Middle Ages. The concept, in St Josemaría: "it is an invitation, an aid to decide, never – or by far – a coercion"²⁹⁹.

"It is not like a material push, but the abundance of light, of doctrine; the spiritual stimulus of your prayer and your work, which is an authentic witness of doctrine; the cluster of sacrifices, which you know how to offer; the smile, which comes to your mouth, because you are a child of God (...). Add to all this your flair and your human sympathy, and we will have the contents of the *compelle intrare*.³⁰⁰"

'In the parable of the wedding feast, when the master of the house finds out that some guests have declined his invitation with poor excuses, he tells his servant, 'Go out into the highways and hedgerows and compel — *compelle intrare* — people to come in.' Surely this is coercion, an act of violence against the legitimate freedom of each individual conscience?

If we meditate on the Gospel and reflect on the teachings of Jesus, we will not mistake these commands for coercion. See how gently Christ invites: 'If you have a mind to be perfect... If any man would come after me...' His *compelle intrare* implies no violence, either physical or moral. Rather, it reflects the power of attraction of Christian example, which shows in its way of acting the power of God: 'See how the Father attracts. He delights in teaching, and not in imposing necessity on men. That is how he attracts men towards himself.'³⁰¹

If you have holy shamelessness, you won't be worried by the thought of 'what will people say?' or 'what can they have said?'³⁰²

²⁹⁷ Saint Josemaría, *Forge*, no. 842.

²⁹⁸ Saint Josemaría, *Letter*, 19.3.1967, no. 39.

²⁹⁹ Saint Josemaría, *Letter*, 24.10.1942, no. 9.

³⁰⁰ Saint Josemaría, *Letter*, 24.10.1942, no. 9.

³⁰¹ Saint Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 37.

³⁰² Saint Josemaría, *The Way*, no. 391.

c) The holy shamelessness: It refers to the mastery of reason over feelings. It is a question of exercising the freedom to behave as a Christian without being conditioned by the environment, and without the environment being a brake on the apostolate. "

Laugh at ridicule. Despise the bogey of what people will say. See and feel God in yourself and in your surroundings. And you will acquire the holy shamelessness that you need — what a paradox! — in order to live with the refinement of a Christian gentleman." ³⁰³

These three attitudes, St Josemaría says, determine the roadmap of your holiness:

- Reason perfected by the truth that saves;
- Will that wants to glorify God by seeking that others join Him freely
- Feelings that are at the service of reason and will –the double root of freedom.

³⁰³ Saint Josemaría, *The Way*, no. 390.

Freedom in matters which are non-competency of the Civil Authority. Freedom in Civil Society: Religious Freedom and Liberation of God's Children

To promote living conditions in civil society that facilitate the exercise of freedom and are therefore appropriate to the dignity of children of God and suitable for the human improvement of all citizens (i.e. fight pornography, divorce, gay unions, etc.). The first aspect of freedom to be safeguarded is religious freedom: namely, social and civil freedom in religious matters. There must be no coercion on the part of society and the State in religious matters, every person must be able to seek, embrace and profess the religious truth in freedom. This is not religious indifferentism but a limitation of the State's powers. St Josemaría did not use the expression 'religious freedom' but he did use the concept.

Second Vatican Council: *Dignitatis humanae*: right to religious freedom: respect for the freedom of consciences; as a result of the legal delimitation of public authority. The state can't coerce while public order is respected. It is not the mission of the State to guide in the religious area; it must recognize and promote the religious life of citizens; if the State intends to direct or prevent religious acts, exceeds its limits. It should promote the principles of natural law that affect social coexistence (and not all religions promote them).

For St Josemaría the second aspect (legal delimitation) is less present in preaching. It is sometimes implicit and is attached to the first (i.e. teaching religion within university studies):

"The study of religion is a fundamental need. A man who lacks religious formation is a man whose education is incomplete. That is why religion should be present in the universities, where it should be taught at the high, scholarly level of good theology. A university from which religion is absent is an incomplete university, it neglects a fundamental facet of human personality, which does not exclude but rather presupposes the other facets. On the other hand, no one may violate the freedom of students' consciences. Religion has to be studied voluntarily, even though Christians know that, if they want to live their Faith well, they have a grave obligation to receive a sound religious training. A Christian needs doctrine so as to be able to live by it and to give witness of Christ with example and word."³⁰⁴

St Josemaría distinguishes the competencies of the State and the Church: "Christ distinguished the fields of jurisdiction of two authorities: the Church and the State and thereby prevented the harmful effects of *caesarism and clericalism*. (...) He established the autonomy of the Church of God and the legitimate autonomy enjoyed by civil society, in terms of authority and structure"³⁰⁵: This is not promoting religious indifferentism.

Religious duties are both individual and social. "The distinction established by Christ does not mean, in any way, that religion must be relegated to the temple – to the

³⁰⁴ Saint Josemaría, *Conversations*, no. 73.

³⁰⁵ Saint Josemaría, *Letter*, 9.1.1959, no. 31.

sacristy – nor that the ordination of human affairs must fall outside of every Divine and Christian law. For this would be the denial of Christ's faith, which demands the adherence of the whole man, soul and body; both as individual and as member of society"³⁰⁶.

It is society -not the State- that should worship God. Liberation and eradication of unjust structures because they impede the exercise of freedom:

We should defend the rights of the persons for the love of God. However, as this is not the ultimate end, sometimes we may have to suffer injustice. The Christian does not have to assert his rights at any cost. Sometimes charity will lead him to suffer injustice, and other times to fight it. Liberation theology is imbued with Marxism. This doctrine is not compatible with Christianity, even as a system. Liberation from sin is the only true deliverance.³⁰⁷

³⁰⁶ Saint Josemaría, *Letter*, 9.1.1959, no. 31.

³⁰⁷ Saint Josemaría, *Preaching in America*.

Christian commitments as a channel of freedom

Commitment is a contracted obligation. How does the freedom of God's children fits with the assumption of commitments that serve that same Christian vocation? Commitments always involve giving up other goods – that help the personal project of holiness and reinforce the right exercise of freedom: to grow as a human being. Having all possible options always open doesn't help to grow, this does not build. There are commitments or ties that do not help to reach our goal and are a hindrance and prevent progress.

" I want you to be rebels, free and unfettered, because I want you — it is Christ who wants us! — to be children of God."³⁰⁸.

Our Father preached a committed freedom: freedom of / freedom for.

What use is this treasure to them, if there is no commitment guiding their whole lives? Such behaviour goes against their very dignity and nobility as human beings. They are left aimless, with no clear path to guide their footsteps on this earth. You and I have met such people. They then let themselves be carried away by childish vanity, by selfish conceit, by sensuality.

Their freedom turns out to be barren, or produces fruits which even humanly speaking are ridiculous. A person who does not choose, with complete freedom, an upright code of conduct, sooner or later ends up being manipulated by others. He will lead a lazy, parasitic existence, at the mercy of what others decide. He will let himself be blown to and fro by any wind whatsoever, and it will always be others who make up his mind for him....

'No one is forcing me!' they obstinately repeat. No one? Everyone is coercing their make-believe freedom which will not run the risk of accepting responsibility for the consequences of its own free actions. Where there is no love of God, the individual and responsible use of personal freedom becomes impossible. There, despite appearances to the contrary, the individual is coerced at every turn. The indecisive and irresolute person is like plasticine at the mercy of circumstances. Anyone and anything can mould him according to its whim, and especially his passions and the worst tendencies of his own nature wounded by sin.³⁰⁹

Baptismal commitments

Baptismal commitments are strengthened in Confirmation and renewed at different times during our life. A Christian can make other commitments once he discovers what the Lord is asking of him. Baptismal commitments consist of giving up sin, Satan, and his works. This renunciation is a true limit. But it is a limit to the corruption of freedom, not to its perfection. Sin is not freedom, it is debauchery. "The first freedom," St

³⁰⁸ Saint Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 38.

³⁰⁹ Saint Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 29.

Augustine writes, "is to be free from crimes... such as murder, adultery, fornication, theft, fraud, sacrilege and sins like these. When one begins not to be guilty of these crimes (and no Christian should commit them), one begins to raise one's eyes to freedom, but this is but the beginning of freedom, not perfect freedom..."³¹⁰. It is the beginning of freedom, because Christian perfection does not come down to avoiding evil but to positively doing good and to following Christ (cf. Dialogue with the rich young man, Lk 18:22).

Consequences of baptismal commitments

The commitment to follow Christ can be carried out in many ways; St Josemaría makes it apparent that for an ordinary Christian the acceptance of the commitments of professional, family and social life are part of his baptismal commitment to live as a child of God. Human commitments are necessary, but there are other Christian commitments that help to sanctify these other human duties.

St Josemaría invites Christians to update their baptismal commitments not simply in a generic way, but by concretizing in the personal circumstances, with the irrevocable decision to surrender to God. These commitments are not a limit but a channel for freedom. (i.e. they are the highways to drive to a destination or the wings to fly). Whoever keeps these baptismal commitments or their subsequent consequences will be guarded by them. He can live in the freedom that Christ won for us.

Committing doesn't mean losing freedom. Because freedom is for commitment:

"If a man does not allow himself to be bound by noble and clean commitments with which he accepts the responsibility of a family, of a profession, of citizen duties...; if a man has no initiative to make these decisions, life itself will impose them against his will. Then it will come the reaction of rebellion, of violence, of sliding down a path that is not Christian. When all this happens, that soul is even more conditioned than those who willingly wanted to accept commitments, which apparently restricted their freedom- just in appearance- because all the time they were free, as his loyalty would remain free. Otherwise – do not *Forget*, my children – the soul remains more enslaved, with chains that would look like gold- but are still chains- and sometimes they will be of corroded iron"³¹¹.

On the commitments in Opus Dei:

"It is logical, my daughters and sons, that there are limits in our actions as children of God, while we feel and are truly free. The limits and protections of highways, which prevent cars from getting out of the way, could only seem contrary to freedom to those who don't really want to get to where the road leads. Only a person who has lost his mind wants no limitations in his way, such as a car driver who says: why do they put these barriers? And jumps over the other side. That man is not freer for that, but he also runs over the freedom of others, and he will end up getting lost"³¹².

³¹⁰ Jn, 41,10

³¹¹ Notes of Preaching, 25.6.1972, (AGP, P01 7.1972, p. 10-11).1

³¹² Notes of Preaching, 25.6.1972, (AGP, P01 7.1972, p. 8).

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

Forming in Freedom

Will-power. A very important quality. Don't despise little things, for by the continual practice of denying yourself again and again in such things — which are never futile or trivial — with God's grace you will add strength and resilience to your character. In that way you will first become master of yourself, and then a guide, a chief, a leader: to compel and to urge and to inspire others, with your word, with your example, with your knowledge and with your power.³¹³

Freedom and Spontaneity

Optimism

Christian optimism is not a sugary optimism; nor is it a mere human confidence that everything will turn out all right. It is an optimism that sinks its roots in an awareness of our freedom, and in the sure knowledge of the power of grace. It is an optimism which leads us to make demands on ourselves, to struggle to respond at every moment to God's calls.³¹⁴

³¹³ Saint Josemaría, *The Way*, no. 19.

³¹⁴ Saint Josemaría, *Forge*, no. 659.

Second Vatican Council, “*Lumen gentium: Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*”, 21.11.1964.

CHAPTER IV: THE LAITY

31. The term laity is here understood to mean all the faithful except those in holy orders and those in the state of religious life specially approved by the Church. These faithful are by baptism made one body with Christ and are constituted among the People of God; they are in their own way made sharers in the priestly, prophetic, and kingly functions of Christ; and they carry out for their own part the mission of the whole Christian people in the Church and in the world.

What specifically characterizes the laity is their secular nature. It is true that those in holy orders can at times be engaged in secular activities, and even have a secular profession. But they are by reason of their particular vocation especially and professedly ordained to the sacred ministry. Similarly, by their state in life, religious give splendid and striking testimony that the world cannot be transformed and offered to God without the spirit of the beatitudes. But the laity, by their very vocation, seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and by ordering them according to the plan of God. They live in the world, that is, in each and in all of the secular professions and occupations. They live in the ordinary circumstances of family and social life, from which the very web of their existence is woven. They are called there by God that by exercising their proper function and led by the spirit of the Gospel they may work for the sanctification of the world from within as a leaven. In this way they may make Christ known to others, especially by the testimony of a life resplendent in faith, hope and charity. Therefore, since they are tightly bound up in all types of temporal affairs it is their special task to order and to throw light upon these affairs in such a way that they may come into being and then continually increase according to Christ to the praise of the Creator and the Redeemer.

32. By divine institution Holy Church is ordered and governed with a wonderful diversity. "For just as in one body we have many members, yet all the members have not the same function, so we, the many, are one body in Christ, but severally members one of another".(191) Therefore, the chosen People of God is one: "one Lord, one faith, one baptism"(192); sharing a common dignity as members from their regeneration in Christ, having the same filial grace and the same vocation to perfection; possessing in common one salvation, one hope and one undivided charity. There is, therefore, in Christ and in the Church no inequality on the basis of race or nationality, social condition or sex, because "there is neither Jew nor Greek: there is neither bond nor free: there is neither male nor female. For you are all 'one' in Christ Jesus".(193)

If therefore in the Church everyone does not proceed by the same path, nevertheless all are called to sanctity and have received an equal privilege of faith through the justice of God.(194) And if by the will of Christ some are made teachers, pastors and dispensers of mysteries on behalf of others, yet all share a true equality with regard to the dignity and to the activity common to all the faithful for the building up of the Body of Christ. For the distinction which the Lord made between sacred ministers and the rest of the People of God bears within it a certain union, since pastors and the other faithful are bound to each other by a mutual need. Pastors of the Church, following the example of the Lord, should minister to one another and to the other faithful. These in their turn should enthusiastically lend their joint assistance to their pastors and teachers. Thus in their diversity all bear witness to the wonderful unity in

the Body of Christ. This very diversity of graces, ministries and works gathers the children of God into one, because "all these things are the work of one and the same Spirit".(195)

33. The laity are gathered together in the People of God and make up the Body of Christ under one head. Whoever they are they are called upon, as living members, to expend all their energy for the growth of the Church and its continuous sanctification, since this very energy is a gift of the Creator and a blessing of the Redeemer.

The lay apostolate, however, is a participation in the salvific mission of the Church itself. Through their baptism and confirmation all are commissioned to that apostolate by the Lord Himself. Moreover, by the sacraments, especially holy Eucharist, that charity toward God and man which is the soul of the apostolate is communicated and nourished. Now the laity are called in a special way to make the Church present and operative in those places and circumstances where only through them can it become the salt of the earth (2*). Thus every layman, in virtue of the very gifts bestowed upon him, is at the same time a witness and a living instrument of the mission of the Church itself "according to the measure of Christ's bestowal".(197)

Besides this apostolate which certainly pertains to all Christians, the laity can also be called in various ways to a more direct form of cooperation in the apostolate of the Hierarchy (3*). This was the way certain men and women assisted Paul the Apostle in the Gospel, laboring much in the Lord.(198) Further, they have the capacity to assume from the Hierarchy certain ecclesiastical functions, which are to be performed for a spiritual purpose.

Upon all the laity, therefore, rests the noble duty of working to extend the divine plan of salvation to all men of each epoch and in every land. Consequently, may every opportunity be given them so that, according to their abilities and the needs of the times, they may zealously participate in the saving work of the Church.

34. The supreme and eternal Priest, Christ Jesus, since he wills to continue his witness and service also through the laity, vivifies them in this Spirit and increasingly urges them on to every good and perfect work.

For besides intimately linking them to His life and His mission, He also gives them a sharing in His priestly function of offering spiritual worship for the glory of God and the salvation of men. For this reason the laity, dedicated to Christ and anointed by the Holy Spirit, are marvelously called and wonderfully prepared so that ever more abundant fruits of the Spirit may be produced in them. For all their works, prayers and apostolic endeavors, their ordinary married and family life, their daily occupations, their physical and mental relaxation, if carried out in the Spirit, and even the hardships of life, if patiently borne—all these become "spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ".(199) Together with the offering of the Lord's body, they are most fittingly offered in the celebration of the Eucharist. Thus, as those everywhere who adore in holy activity, the laity consecrate the world itself to God.

35. Christ, the great Prophet, who proclaimed the Kingdom of His Father both by the testimony of His life and the power of His words, continually fulfills His prophetic office until the complete manifestation of glory. He does this not only through the hierarchy who teach in His name and with His authority, but also through the laity whom He made His witnesses and to whom He gave understanding of the faith (sensu fidei) and an attractiveness in speech(200) so that the power of the Gospel might shine forth in their daily social and family life. They conduct themselves as children of the promise, and thus strong in faith and in hope they make the most of the present,(201) and with patience await the glory that is to come.(202) Let them

not, then, hide this hope in the depths of their hearts, but even in the program of their secular life let them express it by a continual conversion and by wrestling "against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness.(203)

Just as the sacraments of the New Law, by which the life and the apostolate of the faithful are nourished, prefigure a new heaven and a new earth,(204) so too the laity go forth as powerful proclaimers of a faith in things to be hoped for,(205) when they courageously join to their profession of faith a life springing from faith. This evangelization, that is, this announcing of Christ by a living testimony as well as by the spoken word, takes on a specific quality and a special force in that it is carried out in the ordinary surroundings of the world.

In connection with the prophetic function is that state of life which is sanctified by a special sacrament obviously of great importance, namely, married and family life. For where Christianity pervades the entire mode of family life, and gradually transforms it, one will find there both the practice and an excellent school of the lay apostolate. In such a home husbands and wives find their proper vocation in being witnesses of the faith and love of Christ to one another and to their children. The Christian family loudly proclaims both the present virtues of the Kingdom of God and the hope of a blessed life to come. Thus by its example and its witness it accuses the world of sin and enlightens those who seek the truth.

Consequently, even when preoccupied with temporal cares, the laity can and must perform a work of great value for the evangelization of the world. For even if some of them have to fulfill their religious duties on their own, when there are no sacred ministers or in times of persecution; and even if many of them devote all their energies to apostolic work; still it remains for each one of them to cooperate in the external spread and the dynamic growth of the Kingdom of Christ in the world. Therefore, let the laity devotedly strive to acquire a more profound grasp of revealed truth, and let them insistently beg of God the gift of wisdom.

36. Christ, becoming obedient even unto death and because of this exalted by the Father,(206) entered into the glory of His kingdom. To Him all things are made subject until He subjects Himself and all created things to the Father that God may be all in all.(207) Now Christ has communicated this royal power to His disciples that they might be constituted in royal freedom and that by true penance and a holy life they might conquer the reign of sin in themselves.(208) Further, He has shared this power so that serving Christ in their fellow men they might by humility and patience lead their brethren to that King for whom to serve is to reign. But the Lord wishes to spread His kingdom also by means of the laity, namely, a kingdom of truth and life, a kingdom of holiness and grace, a kingdom of justice, love and peace (4*). In this kingdom creation itself will be delivered from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the sons of God.(209) Clearly then a great promise and a great trust is committed to the disciples: "All things are yours, and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's".(210)

The faithful, therefore, must learn the deepest meaning and the value of all creation, as well as its role in the harmonious praise of God. They must assist each other to live holier lives even in their daily occupations. In this way the world may be permeated by the spirit of Christ and it may more effectively fulfill its purpose in justice, charity and peace. The laity have the principal role in the overall fulfillment of this duty. Therefore, by their competence in secular training and by their activity, elevated from within by the grace of Christ, let them vigorously contribute their effort, so that created goods may be perfected by human labor, technical skill and civic culture for the benefit of all men according to the design of the Creator and the light of His Word. May the goods of this world be more equitably distributed among all men, and may they in their own way be conducive to universal progress in human and Christian freedom.

In this manner, through the members of the Church, will Christ progressively illumine the whole of human society with His saving light.

Moreover, let the laity also by their combined efforts remedy the customs and conditions of the world, if they are an inducement to sin, so that they all may be conformed to the norms of justice and may favor the practice of virtue rather than hinder it. By so doing they will imbue culture and human activity with genuine moral values; they will better prepare the field of the world for the seed of the Word of God; and at the same time they will open wider the doors of the Church by which the message of peace may enter the world.

Because of the very economy of salvation the faithful should learn how to distinguish carefully between those rights and duties which are theirs as members of the Church, and those which they have as members of human society. Let them strive to reconcile the two, remembering that in every temporal affair they must be guided by a Christian conscience, since even in secular business there is no human activity which can be withdrawn from God's dominion. In our own time, however, it is most urgent that this distinction and also this harmony should shine forth more clearly than ever in the lives of the faithful, so that the mission of the Church may correspond more fully to the special conditions of the world today. For it must be admitted that the temporal sphere is governed by its own principles, since it is rightly concerned with the interests of this world. But that ominous doctrine which attempts to build a society with no regard whatever for religion, and which attacks and destroys the religious liberty of its citizens, is rightly to be rejected (5*).

37. The laity have the right, as do all Christians, to receive in abundance from their spiritual shepherds the spiritual goods of the Church, especially the assistance of the word of God and of the sacraments (6*). They should openly reveal to them their needs and desires with that freedom and confidence which is fitting for children of God and brothers in Christ. They are, by reason of the knowledge, competence or outstanding ability which they may enjoy, permitted and sometimes even obliged to express their opinion on those things which concern the good of the Church (7*). When occasions arise, let this be done through the organs erected by the Church for this purpose. Let it always be done in truth, in courage and in prudence, with reverence and charity toward those who by reason of their sacred office represent the person of Christ.

The laity should, as all Christians, promptly accept in Christian obedience decisions of their spiritual shepherds, since they are representatives of Christ as well as teachers and rulers in the Church. Let them follow the example of Christ, who by His obedience even unto death, opened to all men the blessed way of the liberty of the children of God. Nor should they omit to pray for those placed over them, for they keep watch as having to render an account of their souls, so that they may do this with joy and not with grief.(211)

Let the spiritual shepherds recognize and promote the dignity as well as the responsibility of the laity in the Church. Let them willingly employ their prudent advice. Let them confidently assign duties to them in the service of the Church, allowing them freedom and room for action. Further, let them encourage lay people so that they may undertake tasks on their own initiative. Attentively in Christ, let them consider with fatherly love the projects, suggestions and desires proposed by the laity.(8) However, let the shepherds respectfully acknowledge that just freedom which belongs to everyone in this earthly city*

A great many wonderful things are to be hoped for from this familiar dialogue between the laity and their spiritual leaders: in the laity a strengthened sense of personal responsibility; a renewed enthusiasm; a more ready application of their talents to the projects of their spiritual

leaders. The latter, on the other hand, aided by the experience of the laity, can more clearly and more incisively come to decisions regarding both spiritual and temporal matters. In this way, the whole Church, strengthened by each one of its members, may more effectively fulfill its mission for the life of the world.

38. Each individual layman must stand before the world as a witness to the resurrection and life of the Lord Jesus and a symbol of the living God. All the laity as a community and each one according to his ability must nourish the world with spiritual fruits.(212) They must diffuse in the world that spirit which animates the poor, the meek, the peace makers—whom the Lord in the Gospel proclaimed as blessed.(213) In a word, "Christians must be to the world what the soul is to the body."(9*)

CHAPTER V

THE UNIVERSAL CALL TO HOLINESS IN THE CHURCH

39. The Church, whose mystery is being set forth by this Sacred Synod, is believed to be indefectibly holy. Indeed Christ, the Son of God, who with the Father and the Spirit is praised as "uniquely holy," (1) loved the Church as His bride, delivering Himself up for her. He did this that He might sanctify her.(214) He united her to Himself as His own body and brought it to perfection by the gift of the Holy Spirit for God's glory. Therefore in the Church, everyone whether belonging to the hierarchy, or being cared for by it, is called to holiness, according to the saying of the Apostle: "For this is the will of God, your sanctification".(215) However, this holiness of the Church is unceasingly manifested, and must be manifested, in the fruits of grace which the Spirit produces in the faithful; it is expressed in many ways in individuals, who in their walk of life, tend toward the perfection of charity, thus causing the edification of others; in a very special way this (holiness) appears in the practice of the counsels, customarily called "evangelical." This practice of the counsels, under the impulsion of the Holy Spirit, undertaken by many Christians, either privately or in a Church-approved condition or state of life, gives and must give in the world an outstanding witness and example of this same holiness.*

40. The Lord Jesus, the divine Teacher and Model of all perfection, preached holiness of life to each and everyone of His disciples of every condition. He Himself stands as the author and consumator of this holiness of life: "Be you therefore perfect, even as your heavenly Father is perfect".(216)(2*) Indeed He sent the Holy Spirit upon all men that He might move them inwardly to love God with their whole heart and their whole soul, with all their mind and all their strength(217) and that they might love each other as Christ loves them.(218) The followers of Christ are called by God, not because of their works, but according to His own purpose and grace. They are justified in the Lord Jesus, because in the baptism of faith they truly become sons of God and sharers in the divine nature. In this way they are really made holy. Then too, by God's gift, they must hold on to and complete in their lives this holiness they have received. They are warned by the Apostle to live "as becomes saints", (219) and to put on "as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved a heart of mercy, kindness, humility, meekness, patience", (220) and to possess the fruit of the Spirit in holiness.(221) Since truly we all offend in many things (222) we all need God's mercies continually and we all must daily pray: "Forgive us our debts"(223)(3*)

Thus it is evident to everyone, that all the faithful of Christ of whatever rank or status, are called to the fullness of the Christian life and to the perfection of charity;(4*) by this holiness as such a more human manner of living is promoted in this earthly society. In order that the faithful may reach this perfection, they must use their strength accordingly as they have

received it, as a gift from Christ. They must follow in His footsteps and conform themselves to His image seeking the will of the Father in all things. They must devote themselves with all their being to the glory of God and the service of their neighbor. In this way, the holiness of the People of God will grow into an abundant harvest of good, as is admirably shown by the life of so many saints in Church history.

41. The classes and duties of life are many, but holiness is one—that sanctity which is cultivated by all who are moved by the Spirit of God, and who obey the voice of the Father and worship God the Father in spirit and in truth. These people follow the poor Christ, the humble and cross-bearing Christ in order to be worthy of being sharers in His glory. Every person must walk unhesitatingly according to his own personal gifts and duties in the path of living faith, which arouses hope and works through charity.

In the first place, the shepherds of Christ's flock must holily and eagerly, humbly and courageously carry out their ministry, in imitation of the eternal high Priest, the Shepherd and Guardian of our souls. They ought to fulfill this duty in such a way that it will be the principal means also of their own sanctification. Those chosen for the fullness of the priesthood are granted the ability of exercising the perfect duty of pastoral charity by the grace of the sacrament of Orders. This perfect duty of pastoral charity (5) is exercised in every form of episcopal care and service, prayer, sacrifice and preaching. By this same sacramental grace, they are given the courage necessary to lay down their lives for their sheep, and the ability of promoting greater holiness in the Church by their daily example, having become a pattern for their flock.(224)*

Priests, who resemble bishops to a certain degree in their participation of the sacrament of Orders, form the spiritual crown of the bishops.(6) They participate in the grace of their office and they should grow daily in their love of God and their neighbor by the exercise of their office through Christ, the eternal and unique Mediator. They should preserve the bond of priestly communion, and they should abound in every spiritual good and thus present to all men a living witness to God.(7*) All this they should do in emulation of those priests who often, down through the course of the centuries, left an outstanding example of the holiness of humble and hidden service. Their praise lives on in the Church of God. By their very office of praying and offering sacrifice for their own people and the entire people of God, they should rise to greater holiness. Keeping in mind what they are doing and imitating what they are handling,(8*) these priests, in their apostolic labors, rather than being ensnared by perils and hardships, should rather rise to greater holiness through these perils and hardships. They should ever nourish and strengthen their action from an abundance of contemplation, doing all this for the comfort of the entire Church of God. All priests, and especially those who are called "diocesan priests," due to the special title of their ordination, should keep continually before their minds the fact that their faithful loyalty toward and their generous cooperation with their bishop is of the greatest value in their growth in holiness.*

Ministers of lesser rank are also sharers in the mission and grace of the Supreme Priest. In the first place among these ministers are deacons, who, in as much as they are dispensers of Christ's mysteries and servants of the Church,(9) should keep themselves free from every vice and stand before men as personifications of goodness and friends of God.(225) Clerics, who are called by the Lord and are set aside as His portion in order to prepare themselves for the various ministerial offices under the watchful eye of spiritual shepherds, are bound to bring their hearts and minds into accord with this special election (which is theirs). They will accomplish this by their constancy in prayer, by their burning love, and by their unremitting recollection of whatever is true, just and of good repute. They will accomplish all this for the glory and honor of God. Besides these already named, there are also laymen, chosen of God*

and called by the bishop. These laymen spend themselves completely in apostolic labors, working the Lord's field with much success.(10).*

Furthermore, married couples and Christian parents should follow their own proper path (to holiness) by faithful love. They should sustain one another in grace throughout the entire length of their lives. They should imbue their offspring, lovingly welcomed as God's gift, with Christian doctrine and the evangelical virtues. In this manner, they offer all men the example of unwearied and generous love; in this way they build up the brotherhood of charity; in so doing, they stand as the witnesses and cooperators in the fruitfulness of Holy Mother Church; by such lives, they are a sign and a participation in that very love, with which Christ loved His Bride and for which He delivered Himself up for her.(11*) A like example, but one given in a different way, is that offered by widows and single people, who are able to make great contributions toward holiness and apostolic endeavor in the Church. Finally, those who engage in labor—and frequently it is of a heavy nature—should better themselves by their human labors. They should be of aid to their fellow citizens. They should raise all of society, and even creation itself, to a better mode of existence. Indeed, they should imitate by their lively charity, in their joyous hope and by their voluntary sharing of each others' burdens, the very Christ who plied His hands with carpenter's tools and Who in union with His Father, is continually working for the salvation of all men. In this, then, their daily work they should climb to the heights of holiness and apostolic activity.

May all those who are weighed down with poverty, infirmity and sickness, as well as those who must bear various hardships or who suffer persecution for justice sake—may they all know they are united with the suffering Christ in a special way for the salvation of the world. The Lord called them blessed in His Gospel and they are those whom "the God of all graces, who has called us unto His eternal glory in Christ Jesus, will Himself, after we have suffered a little while, perfect, strengthen and establish".(226)

Finally all Christ's faithful, whatever be the conditions, duties and circumstances of their lives—and indeed through all these, will daily increase in holiness, if they receive all things with faith from the hand of their heavenly Father and if they cooperate with the divine will. In this temporal service, they will manifest to all men the love with which God loved the world.

42. "God is love, and he who abides in love, abides in God and God in Him".(227) But, God pours out his love into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, Who has been given to us;(228) thus the first and most necessary gift is love, by which we love God above all things and our neighbor because of God. Indeed, in order that love, as good seed may grow and bring forth fruit in the soul, each one of the faithful must willingly hear the Word of God and accept His Will, and must complete what God has begun by their own actions with the help of God's grace. These actions consist in the use of the sacraments and in a special way the Eucharist, frequent participation in the sacred action of the Liturgy, application of oneself to prayer, self-abnegation, lively fraternal service and the constant exercise of all the virtues. For charity, as the bond of perfection and the fullness of the law,(229) rules over all the means of attaining holiness and gives life to these same means.(12) It is charity which guides us to our final end. It is the love of God and the love of one's neighbor which points out the true disciple of Christ.*

Since Jesus, the Son of God, manifested His charity by laying down His life for us, so too no one has greater love than he who lays down his life for Christ and His brothers.(230) From the earliest times, then, some Christians have been called upon—and some will always be called upon—to give the supreme testimony of this love to all men, but especially to persecutors. The Church, then, considers martyrdom as an exceptional gift and as the fullest

proof of love. By martyrdom a disciple is transformed into an image of his Master by freely accepting death for the salvation of the world—as well as his conformity to Christ in the shedding of his blood. Though few are presented such an opportunity, nevertheless all must be prepared to confess Christ before men. They must be prepared to make this profession of faith even in the midst of persecutions, which will never be lacking to the Church, in following the way of the cross.

Likewise, the holiness of the Church is fostered in a special way by the observance of the counsels proposed in the Gospel by Our Lord to His disciples.(13*) An eminent position among these is held by virginity or the celibate state.(231) This is a precious gift of divine grace given by the Father to certain souls,(232) whereby they may devote themselves to God alone the more easily, due to an undivided heart. (14*) This perfect continency, out of desire for the kingdom of heaven, has always been held in particular honor in the Church. The reason for this was and is that perfect continency for the love of God is an incentive to charity, and is certainly a particular source of spiritual fecundity in the world.

The Church continually keeps before it the warning of the Apostle which moved the faithful to charity, exhorting them to experience personally what Christ Jesus had known within Himself. This was the same Christ Jesus, who "emptied Himself, taking the nature of a slave . . . becoming obedient to death",(233) and because of us "being rich, he became poor".(234) Because the disciples must always offer an imitation of and a testimony to the charity and humility of Christ, Mother Church rejoices at finding within her bosom men and women who very closely follow their Saviour who debased Himself to our comprehension. There are some who, in their freedom as sons of God, renounce their own wills and take upon themselves the state of poverty. Still further, some become subject of their own accord to another man, in the matter of perfection for love of God. This is beyond the measure of the commandments, but is done in order to become more fully like the obedient Christ.(15*)

Therefore, all the faithful of Christ are invited to strive for the holiness and perfection of their own proper state. Indeed they have an obligation to so strive. Let all then have care that they guide aright their own deepest sentiments of soul. Let neither the use of the things of this world nor attachment to riches, which is against the spirit of evangelical poverty, hinder them in their quest for perfect love. Let them heed the admonition of the Apostle to those who use this world; let them not come to terms with this world; for this world, as we see it, is passing away.(235)(16*)

190 Eph. 4:15-16.

191 1 Rom. 12:4-5

192 Cf. Eph. 4:5.

193 Gal. 3:28; cf. Col. 3.11.

194 Cf. 2 Pt. 1:1.

195 1 Cor. 12:11.

196 Cf. Mt. 20:28.

197 Eph. 4:7.

198 Cf. Phil. 4:3; Rom. 16:3ff.

199 Pt. 2:5.

200 Cf. Acts 2:17-18; Rev. 19:10.

201 Cf. Eph. 5:16; Col. 4:5.

202 Cf. Rom. 8:25.

203 Eph. 6:12

204 Cf. Rev. 21:1.

205 Cf. Heb. 11:1

206 Cf. Phil. 2:8-9.
 207 Cf 1 Cor. 15:27
 208 Cf. Rom. 6:12.
 209 Cf Rom. 8:21.
 210 1 Cor. 3:23.
 211 Cf. Heb. 13:17.
 212 Cf. Gal. 5:12.
 213 Cf Mt. 5:3-9.
 214 Cf Eph. 5:25-26.
 215 I Thess. 4.3; cf. Eph.1:4.
 216 Mt. 5:48.
 217 Cf. Mk. 12:30.
 218 Cf. Jn. 13.34; 15:12.
 219 Eph. 5:3.
 220 Col . 3:12.
 221 Cf. Gal. 5:22; Rom. 6:22.
 222 Cf. Jas. 3:2.
 223 1 Mt. 6:12.
 224 Cf. 1 Pt. 5:3.
 225 Cf. 1 Tim. 3:8-10 and 12-1
 226 1 Pt. 5:10.
 227 1 Jn. 4:16.
 228 Cf. Rom. 5:5.
 229 Cf. Col. 3:14; Rom. 13:10.
 230 Cf. 1 Jn. 3:16; Jn. 15:13.
 231 Cf 1 Cor. 7:32-34.
 232 Cf Mt. 19:11; 1 Cor.7:7.
 233 Phil. 2:7-8.
 234 2 Cor. 8:9.
 235 Cf 1. Cor. 7:31ff.

Chapter IV

- (1) S. Augustinus, Serm. 340, 1: PL 38, 1483.
- (2) Cfr. Pius XI, Litt. Encycl. Quadragesimo anno 15 maii 1931: AAS 23 (1931) p. 121 s. Pius XII, Alloc. De quelle consolation, 14 oct. 1951: AAS 43 (1951) p. 790 s.
- (3) Cfr. Pius XII, Alloc. Six ans se sont ecoules, 5 oct. 1957: AAS 49 (1957) p. 927. De mandato et missione canonica, cfr. Decretum De Apostolatu laicorum, cap. IV, n. 16, cum notis 12 et 15.
- (4) Ex Praefatione festi Christi Regis.
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Chapter V

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- (2) Cfr. Origenes, Comm. Rom. 7, 7: PG 14, 1122 B. Ps.- Macarius, De Oratione, 11: PG 34, 861 AB. S. Thomas, Summa Theol. II-II, q. 184, a. 3.
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