

# FREEDOM: GIFT AND RESPONSIBILITY

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– Pope Francis

## FREEDOM: GIFT AND RESPONSIBILITY: SCRIPT

*“Jesus wants us free, and this freedom - where is it found? It is to be found in the inner dialogue with God in conscience. If a Christian does not know how to talk with God, does not know how to listen to God, in his own conscience, then he is not free - he is not free.” - Pope Francis (June 30, 2013)*

*“But now that you have been freed from sin and have become slaves of God, the benefit that you have leads to sanctification, and its end is eternal life.” Romans 6:22*

Human freedom is the freely given ability to become who God created us to be and to obtain eternal life in heaven with God, all the angels and saints. By studying Scripture and the teachings of the Church and through consistent prayer with God, we are aware of this freedom and desire to use this freedom to please God. The more we seek goodness and justice, the freer we become.

Freedom results from our union with Christ. In Christ, we are free from sin, which is separation from God. That's real freedom based on faith

*“We know that our old self was crucified with him, so that our sinful body might be done away with, that we might no longer be in slavery to sin”. Romans 6:6*

Jesus brought us freedom from death - not physical death, but set us free from sin, which brings about spiritual death – by dying and rising from the dead. The risen Lord overcomes death and we await eternal life in Christ.

*“Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied.” Matthew 5:6*

In the Gospel, Jesus uses the Beatitudes to teach us what qualities we should freely share in our relationships. He calls us to be “blessed” by choosing lifestyles that benefit others and are not based on selfishness. He calls us to be sensitive and compassionate to those in pain, to be gentle, forgiving, modest, peaceful, respectful, and courageous in our path of discipleship.

*“For you were called for freedom, brothers. But do not use this freedom as an opportunity for the flesh; rather, serve one another through love. For the whole law is fulfilled in one statement, namely, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” Galatians 5:13-14*

Freedom can also be distorted to be viewed as a personal license to do whatever I want to my body, my family, my possessions, or to ignore social responsibility. When we separate freedom from the truth of the Gospel, freedom can become an expression of sin.

Every person has the natural right to be recognized as a free and responsible being, the two go hand in hand. We are born with the God-given gift of reason which helps us choose the good for ourselves and others because authentic freedom is expressed in relationship to others. True freedom cannot be exercised individually from a selfish perspective. It is experienced most profoundly in community through compassion.

*“Freedom is the power, rooted in reason and will, to act or not act, to do this or that, and so to perform deliberate actions on one's own responsibility. Human freedom is a force for growth and maturity in truth and goodness” (CCC no. 1731).*

Catholics believe that if our choices are based on the truth of God's love, rooted in compassion, then we collaborate in transforming our world into the kingdom of God. If not, our choices can lead to pain, suffering and inhumanity. Authentic personal freedom based on Jesus Christ, is the root of a well-ordered and just society and includes the freedom to exercise the right of religious expression, among other rights.

*“But the one who peers into the perfect law\* of freedom and perseveres, and is not a hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, such a one shall be blessed in what he does.(James 1:25)*

With a well-formed and informed conscience, the Church calls us to seek the Truth in all matters especially in regard to religious freedom which is based on the very dignity of the human person as known through the revealed word of God and by reason itself. The Eucharist expresses the mystery of Christ's freedom, the gift of liberation; it means love to the end, for only love can liberate. Sharing our life in Christ and in communion with our brothers and sisters, we freely share our gifts and resources, we make moral decisions that take the other into consideration and that promote the good of others and not just ourselves. The risen Christ is the source and measure of the fullness of all freedom.