

**Day 12 ★ July 2, 2016**

# Reflections for the FORTNIGHT FOR FREEDOM

*These reflections and readings from the Vatican II document Declaration on Religious Liberty (Dignitatis Humanae) are intended for daily use during the Fortnight for Freedom, a national campaign designated by the U.S. Catholic bishops for teaching and witness in support of religious liberty. The readings and the questions that follow can be used for group discussion or for personal reflection.*

**Among the things which** concern the good of the Church and indeed the welfare of society here on earth—things therefore which are always and everywhere to be kept secure and defended against all injury—this certainly is preeminent, namely, that the Church should enjoy that full measure of freedom which her care for salvation of men requires. This freedom is sacred, because the only-begotten Son endowed with it the Church which He purchased with His blood. It is so much the property of the Church that to act against it is to act against the will of God. The freedom of the Church is the fundamental principle in what concerns the relations between the Church and governments and the whole civil order.

*Declaration on Religious Liberty  
(Dignitatis Humanae), no. 13  
December 7, 1965*

## Reflection for Day Twelve

In Chapter I, the Council Fathers considered the nature of religious freedom from a rational and philosophical perspective—the dignity and equality of human beings and the natural right to religious liberty. In Chapter II, they turn to examining religious liberty in the light of Christian Revelation.

In this context, the Council Fathers forthrightly insist that the Church must “enjoy that full measure of freedom which her care for salvation of men requires.” Jesus became man, died, and rose from the dead so that all men and women would come to salvation—to know the fullness of truth and the fullness of the Father’s love. This is why the Church’s religious freedom is “sacred.” Jesus, through the Holy Spirit,

founded the Church as the means by which his saving message and presence would go forth to all the world. Only then would Jesus’ Gospel be lived out among all nations and peoples. Only if the Church is free can she rightly fulfill her divine commission. This is why the Church jealously guards her freedom while simultaneously fostering harmonious, appropriate, and just relations with various governments throughout the world.

What present circumstances threaten the freedom of the Catholic Church particularly? Are threats to the Church’s freedom always from without, or do threats arise from within the Church itself? What threats in the past has the Church in our country had to contend with?



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