

Day 5 ★ June 25, 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.

There is a further consideration. The religious acts whereby men, in private and in public and out of a sense of personal conviction, direct their lives to God transcend by their very nature the order of terrestrial and temporal affairs. Government, therefore, ought indeed to take account of the religious life of the people and show it favor, since the function of government is to make provision for the common welfare. However, it would clearly transgress the limits set to its power were it to presume to direct or inhibit acts that are religious.

*Declaration on Religious Liberty
(Dignitatis Humanae), no. 3
December 7, 1965*

Reflection for Day Five

What the Council Fathers teach in this short paragraph is very important. They previously stated that governments should not deny religious liberty. Here they state what governments should positively do with regards to religion. Since people, through their religious beliefs, direct their lives toward God, governments are positively to take this into account. Not only should governments not hinder religious life, they should also “show it favor.” Since religious belief is a good within culture and society, governments should foster and aid the good that religion brings to the commonwealth. This does not mean that a government should favor one religion over another or that it should attempt to direct what religions should believe or do. Rather, governments are to create an environment in which religious life flourishes for the good of all. In providing such an environment where

religious life prospers, governments contribute to the good of individuals as well as to the good of society as a whole.

How does religion contribute to the good of society? In what ways might it hinder the good of society? Do contemporary Western governments view religion in a positive or negative light? How can governments today foster or aid the good of religious belief?



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