

**Day 7 ★ June 27, 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.*

**Religious bodies also have** the right not to be hindered in their public teaching and witness to their faith, whether by the spoken or by the written word. However, in spreading religious faith and in introducing religious practices, everyone ought at all times to refrain from any manner of action which might seem to carry a hint of coercion or of a kind of persuasion that would be dishonorable or unworthy, especially when dealing with poor or uneducated people. Such a manner of action would have to be considered an abuse of one's own right and a violation of the rights of others.

In addition, it comes within the meaning of religious freedom that religious bodies should not be prohibited from freely undertaking to show the special value of their doctrine in what concerns the organization of society and the inspiration of the whole of human activity. Finally, the social nature of man and the very nature of religion afford the foundation of the right of men freely to hold meetings and to establish educational, cultural, charitable, and social organizations, under the impulse of their own religious sense.

*Declaration on Religious Liberty  
(Dignitatis Humanae), no. 4  
December 7, 1965*

## Reflection for Day Seven

While the Council Fathers insist that religious bodies must be free to teach and bear witness to their faith, they equally stress that this freedom must never be abused. It is not only governments that can deny their freedom; in attempting to spread their own beliefs, religions should not force others, physically or psychologically, to convert. Rather, each person's dignity

and freedom must be maintained. The accepting of religious beliefs must be an act of freedom, otherwise it is done not because it is believed to be true but rather out of fear and force. The right to profess and proclaim one's own faith cannot violate the same right of another.

That being said, religious bodies should be free to provide reasons as to why their beliefs are true and why it would be of value for others to believe what they believe. They should also be free to address how their beliefs contribute to the good of society.

What contemporary examples are there of religious bodies using coercion in an attempt to spread their faith or hindering others from exercising their faith? What contributions does the Catholic Church make to society and culture?



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