



Ad Hoc Committee for Religious Liberty

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Most Reverend William E. Lori
Archbishop of Baltimore
Chairman

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Dear Administrators and Directors of Religious Education,

Religious liberty is a topic that has been at the forefront of the Catholic bishops' attention in recent years, but its implications—especially if it is curtailed or threatened—are timeless. For this reason, the USCCB Ad Hoc Committee for Religious Liberty has recommended the following set of lesson plans designed for high school students to learn more about this important topic.

The five lesson plans will teach students about religious liberty according to reason; religious liberty as a civil right; rights and duties according to Revelation; rights and duties of the Church in society; and duties of the State regarding religious liberty.

The lesson plans incorporate the Ad Hoc Committee's statement, *Our First, Most Cherished Liberty*, as well as excerpts from *Dignitatis Humanae*, the groundbreaking Vatican II document on religious liberty. The lesson plans also provide room for discussion about recent, newsworthy restrictions on religious liberty in the United States.

I am grateful for your efforts to catechize students about religious liberty. This catechesis will enable them to participate in and understand the ongoing national conversation on religious liberty, which is so important for the Church's ability to contribute to the common good of our society. Religious liberty is a fundamental right that should be strengthened and preserved by all.

Thank you for encouraging your students to learn about and defend religious liberty.

Faithfully yours in Christ,

Most Reverend William E. Lori
Archbishop of Baltimore
Chairman, USCCB Ad Hoc Committee for Religious Liberty

The Right of Catholics to Religious Liberty in America

High School Unit Plan

Religious liberty is a concept based on the dignity of the human person, whose fundamental freedom is to seek the highest, lasting Truth, who is God. In his book *Catholicism*, Father Robert Barron explains that “never-changing divine love experienced by human beings...depends on the freedom of the one who does the experiencing.” Since the human person is also a social being, religious liberty must deal both with an individual’s right to act religiously and the right of the religious community to function in the social order. In that way, the human person receives God’s life of truth and love freely given when that individual loves God in return, both in worship and in good deeds.

There are five distinct lessons addressing different dimensions of religious liberty:

- Lesson A—Religious Liberty according to Reason
- Lesson B—Religious Liberty as a Civil Right
- Lesson C—Rights and Duties according to Revelation
- Lesson D—Rights and Duties of the Church in Society
- Lesson E—Duties of the State regarding Religious Liberty

Please note that Lessons A and C focus on the two ways of understanding religious liberty: through reason based on the nature of the human person and through faith based on revelation. They can be taught as one lesson if desired. Those seeking to address particular concerns as the HHS mandate and what the Catholic response will find Lesson D helpful. The content here may also be especially adapted for use in American Government and U.S. History classes.

Overview of this Unit Plan: This unit plan defines and applies the concept of religious liberty in light of recent mandates that violate religious liberty. This resource includes:

- I. **Lesson summaries** that give the teacher an overview of the teaching of the Catholic Church
- II. **Five 30-40 minute Lessons** that use the Ecclesial Method. This method is explained within each plan as the lesson progresses. The Ecclesial Method is scripted so that important information is not omitted. Experienced educators will find that these lessons lend themselves to other formats as well by taking the information here and using Understanding by Design (UbD) or GANAG for planning purposes.
- III. **Handouts** (ready to photocopy) can be used to apply the concepts of religious liberty to the case studies in the application portion of the lesson.
- IV. **Additional Resources** with web links to current Church Statements, sites for taking action and USCCB resources (<http://www.usccb.org/freedom>)

Purpose of the Unit Plan

- To affirm that all persons have the right to know and worship the true God.

- To respond to Pope Benedict XVI’s description of “the need for an engaged, articulate and well-formed Catholic laity” who approach threats against religious liberty with critical judgment and courage in action.
- To reiterate to students the advice of Saint John the Apostle and Evangelist to “the lady” in the form of spiritual direction, “And this is love, that we follow his [God’s] commandments; this is the commandment, as you have heard from the beginning, that you follow love” (2 John 6). *We too should read, note, and practice the Ten Commandments and live as many virtues as we can, especially faith, hope, and love so that we can approach threats against religious liberty with critical judgment and courage in action.*
- To take to heart the advice of Pope Francis: *“Let the Risen Jesus enter your life, welcome him as a friend with trust: he is life! If up till now you have kept him at a distance, step forward. He will receive you with open arms. If you have been indifferent, take a risk: you won’t be disappointed. If following him seems difficult, don’t be afraid, trust him, be confident that he is close to you, he is with you and he will give you the peace you are looking for and the strength to live as he would have you do.”* Pope Francis carried out his own advice when he met with President Obama: <https://www.lifesitenews.com/news/pope-francis-raises-abortion-religious-liberty-in-candid-meeting-with-obama>
- To stimulate the awareness that religious liberty is under attack, both at home and abroad.

Materials Needed (All resource materials are enclosed within this unit plan or referenced as links on the internet, or found in the unit’s appendix)

1. Lessons A, B, C, D, E: Prayer card for closing prayer
2. Lesson A: CCC sections for the Religious Liberty Lesson
3. Lesson C: Scripture and Questions the Passages Answer; Two Kinds of Freedom Grid
4. Lesson C: View clips from the movie *God’s Not Dead*.
5. Lesson D: Print sheet “Current Threats to Religious Liberty”
6. Lesson E: Handout Summary of *Dignitatis Humanae*
7. Lesson E: Thoreau, “On Civil Disobedience”

I. Lesson Summaries

Lesson A:

Freedom is one's ability to act for a good. The highest freedom is not the ability to do anything whatever, but instead the ability to act for the highest good. Thus, man's highest freedom is the ability to fulfill his nature, to know truth in its highest form, and to be united with it, to an unlimited degree. This highest truth and eternal good is God. Man's highest freedom, then, is the ability to order his life to seek truth, to embrace it, and to become united with it. This is also called religious freedom. Every human person has the right to worship the true God.

Lesson B:

Religious liberty is a civil right that is rooted in human dignity. Because of this great dignity of being able to know and love, a person may not be forced to act against his conscience.

Lesson C:

Since it is in the nature of the human person to be social, believers have the right to worship the true God in community, and to follow their consciences outside the confines of their houses of worship.

Lesson D:

The Church as the community of believers has the right to religious freedom to carry out the mission of Christ to proclaim the Gospel. The Church affirms the religious liberty of all persons. While not every person knows the true God, he has the right to seek the true God according to his own conscience.

Lesson E:

Because religious liberty¹ is man's first and highest freedom, it is the duty of the government to protect this freedom. Religious liberty is when the civil society recognizes the natural ordering of every person to seek the true and highest good. Government can neither force a person to violate his conscience nor prevent a person from acting according to his religious beliefs. Government also has the duty to foster the good of religious life of its citizens, for the sake of the persons that government serves, and for the improving of society through growth in peace, justice and virtue. This means that government has the duty to see that all persons are treated equally, preventing one religious body from violating the consciences of other persons or the rights of other religious communities.

¹ Throughout this lesson, "religious freedom" and "religious liberty" are used interchangeably.

II. Lessons

Lesson A: Religious Liberty according to Reason

Prior Knowledge Assignment in Preparation for Lesson A

Homework:

In preparation for the beginning of the Religious Liberty lesson or unit, students should complete “an entrance slip” (see appendix) that includes a definition of religious liberty that is written in their own words and reflects their own understanding of the term. The entrance slip should also include an example of a violation of religious liberty that they have heard of or that someone they know has experienced. This homework should be collected and reviewed by the teacher as the students come into class so that the teacher has some idea of the students’ understanding of the subject before class begins. This quick formative assessment can help the teacher to improvise his/her prepared lesson plans so that he/she responds to the students’ needs in interesting and thought-provoking ways.

Summary:

Freedom is one’s ability to act for a good. The highest freedom is not the ability to do anything whatever, but instead the ability to act for the highest good. Thus, man’s highest freedom is the ability to fulfill his nature, to know truth in its highest form, and to be united with it, to an unlimited degree. This highest truth and eternal good is God. Man’s highest freedom, then, is the ability to order his life to seek truth, embrace it, and become united with it. This is also called religious freedom. Every human person has the right to seek the true God.

Objectives:

1. to define religious liberty as freedom **for** truth and **from** coercion
2. to explain that religious liberty is the first freedom of the human person who must search for religious truth and be free to follow God

Welcome and prayer, direct the focus of the students (5 minutes)

In the Ecclesial Method, the teacher provides for a time for students to leave behind the concerns of the day and focus on God’s work in their lives. The class turns their minds and hearts to God in prayer. This time of prayer may include special prayers composed for religious liberty. Then the teacher makes a connection between what the students will learn and how this lesson is applicable to the students now.

Teacher reads:

The Statement of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) Ad Hoc Committee for Religious Liberty, “Our First, Most Cherished Liberty,” issued in 2012, begins as follows: We are Catholics. We are Americans. We are proud to be both, grateful for the gift of faith which is ours as Christian disciples, and grateful for the gift of liberty which is ours as American citizens

Teacher says:

In this lesson, you will learn what religious liberty is, what it is not, and why it is our first freedom. Let us remember those people whose religious liberty is violated, ask that we will always be courageous enough to defend the dignity of all people, and begin with a prayer from the Statement on Religious Liberty, “Our First, Most Cherished Liberty”:

*Almighty God, Father of all nations,
For freedom you have set us free in Christ Jesus (Gal 5:1).
We praise and bless you for the gift of religious liberty,
the foundation of human rights, justice, and the common good.
Grant to our leaders the wisdom to protect and promote our liberties;
By your grace may we have the courage to defend them, for ourselves and for all those who live in this blessed
land.
We ask this through the intercession of Mary Immaculate, our patroness,
and in the name of your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
with whom you live and reign, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.*

Ask (to stimulate interest and demonstrate the need for this lesson):

1. What is your understanding of the term “religious liberty”? *Have a student be the class scribe to type for projection on a screen or write on a board the definitions shared aloud.*
2. What are some problems that arise over religious liberty? *Allow students to share the violations against religious liberty that they have heard about.*

Note: The teacher needs to moderate the students’ participation and refer to definitions presented in this unit plan so that the students’ prior knowledge can be corrected or strengthened through meaningful discussion and correction of vague or erroneous definitions and examples.

If the teachers knows the group well and humor can be integrated into the lesson in a meaningful way, the following examples or examples like them might be used encourage students to share their examples:

- *The primacy of the right to religious freedom as bound up in man's orientation to the transcendent: an example is Woody from Toy Story. He has “Andy” inscribed upon his boot; that name conveys deeply who he is. When that name is painted over, Woody’s uniqueness is threatened; he becomes just another collectible and can be used/manipulated—just as man, when his orientation to the transcendent is ignored, is more easily manipulated according to ideological/political expediency.*
- *Religion in the public square: it is part of the human experience. Can you imagine Denver Broncos fans not celebrating a Broncos victory because they were afraid of offending fans of the Cleveland Browns?*

The Proclamation

In the Ecclesial Method, the point of the lesson is repeated throughout the lesson. It is the one statement that students should internalize and be able to explain after the lesson. This proclamation helps the participants/students to answer the question “What did you learn about today?” It should be short, well-phrased, clear truth from God, taught authoritatively, based on Scripture and Tradition, free from personal opinion and theological speculation.

To be Catholic and American should mean not having to choose one over the other... What we ask is nothing more than that our God-given right to religious liberty be respected. We ask nothing less than that the Constitution and laws of the United States, which recognize that right, be respected (“Our First, Most Cherished Liberty”)

Explanation—(15 minutes)

In the Ecclesial Method, the terms of the Proclamation are explained, including related terms. The goal is to educate or draw out the meaning of the “good news” that just proclaimed.

- *Through a straightforward explanation which informs and inspires.*
- *Creatively, using audiovisual aids like worksheets, sacred art, diagrams; your testimony; study of a new prayer and/or Scripture verses that pertain to this truth; break into small groups to examine what this truth means; apologetics; memorization*
- *Use the power of image, story and word to fully engage students*
- *Answer participants’/students’ doubts and questions*

Objective 1: to define religious liberty as freedom **for** truth and **from** coercion

Key points:

- **Freedom:** a person can act for a good.
- **Genuine freedom:** the ability to choose the good that leads us to happiness.
- **Religious liberty:** every person has the right to seek the true God, and finding Him, to order one’s life to moving toward Him, obeying His laws, embracing His truth, goodness, and beauty. Civil society recognizes this natural ordering of every person to seek the true and highest good. Thus civil government cannot **force** a person to accept a belief or **prevent** a person from acting according to his beliefs.
- **Religious liberty** is the freedom of human persons to fulfill their obligation to seek God and order their moral life to God. Rooted in the dignity of the human person, who is endowed with reason and free will, religious liberty is an expression of the human person’s ability to take responsibility for his or her actions.
- **Religious liberty** is identifiable both through reason and divine revelation; it exists to allow human persons to fulfill their obligation to seek God and must be a civil or constitutional right (from *Dignitatis Humanae*²) For more on this the teacher may wish to see *Reflections from*

² *Declaration on Religious Freedom (Dignitatis Humanae)*, on the Right of the Person and of Communities to Social and Civil Freedom in Matters Religious, Promulgated by His Holiness POPE PAUL VI on December 7, 1965

(http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vatii_decl_19651207_dignitatis-humanae_en.html).

the 2014 celebration of a Fortnight for Freedom @ <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/religious-liberty/fortnight-for-freedom/upload/fortnight-for-freedom-reflections.pdf>).

- **Religious Liberty is a freedom FOR and a freedom FROM**

- **Freedom FOR** is seeking the truth that is God, ordering one’s moral life to God. Rightful liberty of the person chiefly regards the quest for the values proper to the human spirit. (*Dignitatis Humanae*, no 1)—the free exercise of religion *in society*. Believers have the right to worship the true God. God is supernatural, and is the ultimate value proper to the human spirit. Lesser values cannot constitute the end or purpose of religion.
- **Freedom FROM:** “Nobody may be **forced** to act against his convictions, nor is anyone to be **restrained** from acting in accordance with his conscience in religious matters in private or in public, alone or in association with others, within due limits.”³⁴ This right is based on the very nature of the human person, whose dignity enables him freely to assent to the divine truth which transcends the temporal order. For this reason it “continues to exist even in those who do not live up to their obligation of seeking the truth and adhering to it.”³⁵ CCC 2106³
 - ³⁴ DH 2 § 1.
 - ³⁵ DH 2 § 2.
- See; also see *YouCat* 289-296 <http://www.youcat.org/home/> for a reminder of the definition of conscience]

- **“Due limits”**— The common good [cf. *YouCat* 326-327] of one party can outweigh the consciences of another party. Some examples might be:
 - If someone’s religion demands human sacrifice, the common good of protecting human life outweighs the conscience of the person seeking to sacrifice the life of another human being.
 - A conscience can be wrongly formed or compromised by mental illness. In the case when someone’s wrongly formed conscience or conscience compromised by mental illness leads them to perform acts that are generally considered criminal, like kidnapping and rape as in the case of Elizabeth Smart, a 14-year-old who was kidnapped in Utah in 2002 by a man who claimed to be acting on “religious” beliefs to take another wife.

³ For a fully searchable e-text of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, click the link below:
(<http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catechism/catechism-of-the-catholic-church/epub/index.cfm>)

Summary:

Religious liberty is the freedom a person has to fulfill his obligation to seek God and to order his moral life to God. No one may **force** another to believe nor must any person or group be **prevented** from obeying and following the commands of God.

Dignitatis Humanae, one of the two key social doctrine documents from Vatican II, in paragraph number 2 explains: “**This Vatican Council declares that the human person has a right to religious freedom. This freedom means that all men are to be immune from coercion [the truth is always proposed not imposed; the truth provides its own persuasion; confer with religions of the sword] on the part of individuals or of social groups and of any human power, in such wise that no one is to be forced to act in a manner contrary to his own beliefs, whether privately or publicly, whether alone or in association with others, within due limits.**”

– [cf. *YouCat* 354 for an easier to understand, complementary article]

Teacher reference:

Note: Dignitatis Humanae (1965) is one of the two key social doctrine documents from Vatican II. Western European countries initially opposed it because it seemed to encourage too much pluralism and to downgrade the importance of the objective truths of the Church as well as the leadership of the Pope. However, Eastern European countries, experiencing the oppression of communism, argued and eventually prevailed in supporting the document and its approval and promulgation. They recognized the need for articulating basic human rights, which is reflected in the title: religion liberty is directly linked to who man is as a transcendent being.

Objective 2: to explain that religious liberty is the first freedom of the human person who must search for religious truth and be free to follow God

Teacher says:

Religious Freedom is defined through two sources: reason and revelation. Today we will study religious freedom according to reason.

Definition from Reason: *Lesson A explains religious liberty from reason.*

Write the following paragraph on the board:

- What we know about the human person tells us how to define religious liberty: Human nature recognizes that each person has an intellect which seeks and is fulfilled by truth and a will which is free to choose what is good. The highest truth is God. The person must be free to seek this Truth, embrace it, and live his or her life in a way that will bring him or her to union with God.

- **Or, as the Catechism states:** 2104 “All men are bound to seek the truth, especially in what concerns God and his Church, and to embrace it and hold on to it as they come to know it.”²⁶ This duty derives from “the very dignity of the human person.”²⁷

26 DH 1 § 2.

27 DH 2 § 1.

28 NA 2 § 2.

29 DH 14 § 4.

Teacher reference:

- **Definition from revelation:** *This is explained in Lesson C.*

Application—20 minutes

*In the Ecclesial Method, the class now applies the concepts of the proclamation to concrete situations, either in their own life or in society. The **goal** is to help the participants/students understand how this truth applies to them. To have this truth bear fruit in their lives and lead them to a deeper conversion. Help them to see how they can live out what they have learned in a practical way and challenge them to apply it. Give examples on how they can **witness** to this truth. An important element of application is **service** – how Jesus served us is how we are to serve others.*

It would be good if the students are prepared for this classwork before the unit begins. For example, assigning the CCC sections to be read for homework would introduce the information and help students make better use of time in their small groups.

Religious Liberty according to Reason

In small groups, have students read the Catechism sections on the Handout for Lesson A and answer the questions listed. In the interest of time, the students may be divided into groups, each set of students responsible for answering a portion of the worksheet. The relevant Catechism sections are on a handout in the Handouts section of the Lesson.

CCC sections for the Religious Liberty Lesson

1. “All other freedoms are fragile.” Why?
CCC 1886 and 1887;
CCC 1878-1879; 1883; 1885
2. What is true freedom?
CCC 1730-1734
3. Religious liberty is a foundational freedom. Explain.
CCC 1898-1899, 1902, 1907, 1929-1930
4. But religious liberty can never be sufficient for human happiness. Why not?
CCC 1739-1742; 1718

For a fully searchable e-text of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, click the link below:

<http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catechism/catechism-of-the-catholic-church/epub/index.cfm>

Conclusion and Celebration of our religious liberty--(5 minutes)

In the Ecclesial Method, the class ends with a restatement of the proclamation and reflections that students can take away with them as they live their faith.

Say:

Pope Leo XIII wrote in *Libertas Praestantissimum* 30: “Physical death cannot destroy this honorable ‘freedom of the sons of God.’ This was the freedom that the apostles claimed with unshaken constancy, that the apologists defended with their writings, and that the martyrs in such numbers consecrated with their blood.”

Reflect:

Why does religious liberty matter in my life of faith?

“Render unto Caesar what belongs to Caesar, but render to God what belongs to God.” (Mark 12:17)

Archbishop Chaput comments on this passage, “And that [scripture verse] raises some unsettling questions: What do you and I, and all of us, *really* render to God in our personal lives? If we claim to be disciples, then what does that *actually mean* in the way we speak and act? And yet, the political and legal effort to defend religious liberty – as vital as it is – belongs to a much greater struggle to master and convert our own hearts, and to live for God completely, without alibis or self-delusion. The only question that finally matters is this one: *Will we live wholeheartedly for Jesus Christ?* If so, then we can be a source of freedom for the world. If not, nothing else will do.” (Chaput, Homily at Closing Mass of Fortnight for Freedom)

End with the prayer (see Prayer Card, as given in Additional Resources)

Prayer for the Protection of Religious Liberty

O God our Creator,
from your provident hand
we have received our right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.
You have called us as your people
and given us the right and the duty to worship you,
the only true God, and your Son, Jesus Christ.

Through the power and working of your Holy Spirit,
you call us to live out our faith in the midst of the world,
bringing the light and the saving truth of the Gospel
to every corner of society.

We ask you to bless us
in our vigilance for the gift of religious liberty.
Give us the strength of mind and heart
to readily defend our freedoms when they are threatened;
give us courage in making our voices heard

on behalf of the rights of your Church
and the freedom of conscience of all people of faith.

Grant, we pray, O heavenly Father,
a clear and united voice to all your sons and daughters
gathered in your Church
in this decisive hour in the history of our nation,
so that, with every trial withstood
and every danger overcome—
for the sake of our children, our grandchildren,
and all who come after us—
this great land will always be “one nation, under God,
indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.”

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

II. Lessons

Lesson B- Religious Liberty as a Civil Right

Summary:

Religious liberty is a civil right that is rooted in human dignity. Because of this great dignity of being able to know and love, a person may not be forced to act against his conscience. (Lesson B)

Objectives:

1. to understand religious liberty in the context of a civil right
2. to explain that a person must not be forced to act against his conscience

Welcome and prayer, direct the focus of the students (5 minutes)

In the Ecclesial Method, the teacher provides for a time for students to leave behind the concerns of the day and focus on God's work in their lives. Particularly, the teacher makes a connection between what the students will learn and how this lesson is applicable to the students now. The class turns their minds and hearts to God in prayer.

Teacher reads:

The Statement of USCCB Ad Hoc Committee for Religious Liberty issued "Our First, Most Cherished Liberty," in 2012. It begins as follows:

We are Catholics. We are Americans. We are proud to be both, grateful for the gift of faith which is ours as Christian disciples, and grateful for the gift of liberty which is ours as American citizens ("Our First, Most Cherished Liberty", USCCB Ad Hoc Committee for Religious Liberty).

Teacher says:

In this lesson, you will learn how our civil rights protect religious liberty and how true respect for human dignity requires that a person not be forced to act against his conscience.

Let us begin with a prayer from the Statement on Religious Liberty, "Our First, Most Cherished Liberty." This is the same prayer prayed at the beginning of Lesson A. Feel free to pray with your students in other ways that will also encourage them to take the intentions of religious liberty to heart in their conversations with God.

The Proclamation

In the Ecclesial Method, the point of the lesson is repeated throughout the lesson. It is the one statement that students should internalize and be able to explain after the lesson. This proclamation helps the participants/students to answer the question "What did you learn about today?" It should be short, well-phrased, clear truth from God, taught authoritatively, based on Scripture and Tradition, free from personal opinion and theological speculation.

To be Catholic and American should mean not having to choose one over the other... What we ask is nothing more than that our God-given right to religious liberty be respected. We ask nothing less than that the Constitution and laws of the United States, which recognize that right, be respected (“Our First, Most Cherished Liberty”)

Explanation—(15 minutes)

In the Ecclesial Method, the terms of the Proclamation are explained, including related terms. The goal is to educate or draw out the meaning of the “good news” that just proclaimed.

- *Through a straightforward explanation which informs and inspires.*
- *Creatively, using audiovisual aids like worksheets, sacred art, diagrams; your testimony; study of a new prayer and/or Scripture verses that pertain to this truth; break into small groups to examine what this truth means; apologetics; memorization*
- *Use the power of image, story and word to fully engage students*
- *Answer participants’/students’ doubts and questions*

Objective 1: to understand religious liberty in the context of a civil right

We read in *Dignitatis Humanae 2*: “This right of the human person to religious freedom is to be recognized in the constitutional law whereby society is governed and thus it is to become a civil right.”

Because religious liberty is a right, it comes from the law of God (to be explained in Lesson C) and since every right has corresponding duties or responsibilities, religious liberty imposes certain duties on the believer and the society where the believer lives.

As a civil right, how is religious liberty protected in the United States?

The First Amendment to the United States Constitution states at the outset:

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof...

“Free exercise” is the freedom of every citizen to reach, hold, practice, and change beliefs according to the dictates of conscience. The Free Exercise Clause prohibits governmental interference with religious belief and, within limits, religious practice.

The United States Supreme Court has found that the Free Exercise Clause protects even those religious beliefs that may seem “abhorrent” to some, such as animal sacrifice as practiced by members of the Santeria religion. The Court found that “religious beliefs need not be acceptable, logical, consistent or comprehensible to others in order to merit First Amendment protection.”⁶

⁶ *Church of Lukumi Babalu Aye v. City of Hialeah*, 508 U.S. 520, 531 (1993).

Further, the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA), enacted in 1993, is a federal law that provides special protection for a person's free exercise of his or her religion. Under RFRA, the federal government "shall not substantially burden a person's exercise of religion even if the burden results from a rule of general applicability," unless the law furthers "a compelling government interest" and is the least restrictive way in which to further the government interest.

The U.S. is not the only country to recognize the importance of religious liberty. The *UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights*--a foundational document for international law, created by representatives from all over the world-- recognizes this basic human right in Article 18: "Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance" (<http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/>). Clearly, the framers of this document relied on human reason and saw the need for governments to recognize this civil right.

Why is Religious Liberty the *First* Freedom? The Statement on Religious Liberty entitled "Our First, Most Cherished Liberty," explains why religious liberty is the *first* liberty:

That is our American heritage, our most cherished freedom. **It is the first freedom because if we are not free in our conscience and our practice of religion, all other freedoms are fragile.** If citizens are not free in their own consciences, how can they be free in relation to others, or to the state? If our obligations and duties to God are impeded, or even worse, contradicted by the government, then we can no longer claim to be a land of the free, and a beacon of hope for the world (Our First, Most Cherished Liberty).

- **First freedom**—the ability to direct our lives to our ultimate end, the true and lasting happiness of union with God.
- **Foundational right**—a right that is necessary for a good society. Any lesser end (than God) doesn't really matter. "What does it profit a man," said Jesus, "to gain the whole world if he loses his soul?"

Foundational also because the nature of man includes being religious. In fact, culture comes from the word *cult* which means religious practice. Culture is the stable environment in which the Church can fulfill the mission of Christ.

Foundational to the country—a person fulfills his quest for happiness by pursuing goodness and truth. In so acting, he makes the world a better place. The right to religious liberty doesn't originate in the state, so the state cannot say what persons can and cannot do as they follow God.

The purpose of religious liberty is to create the context for true freedom. (Archbishop Chaput, Homily at the Fortnight Closing Mass)

- True freedom or genuine freedom is not “ability to do as one pleases.” It is the ability to choose the good that leads us to our ultimate happiness, eternal life with God. It is the means to achieving the true, eternal end for which all human persons were made.

Teacher reference:

Religious liberty is a foundational right. It’s necessary for a good society. But it can never be sufficient for human happiness. It’s not an end in itself. In the end, we defend religious liberty in order to live the deeper freedom that is discipleship in Jesus Christ. What good is religious freedom, consecrated in the law, if we don’t then use that freedom to seek God with our whole mind and soul and strength? (Chaput, Homily at the Closing Mass)

Objective 2: to explain that a person must not be forced to act against his conscience

Teacher reads:

James Madison, often called the Father of the Constitution, described **conscience** as “the most sacred of all property.”⁷ He wrote that “the Religion then of every man must be left to the conviction and conscience of every man; and it is the right of every man to exercise it as these may dictate.”⁸ (Our First, Most Cherished Liberty)

3. . . . Wherefore every man has the duty, and therefore the right, to seek the truth in matters religious in order that he may with prudence form for himself right and true judgments of **conscience**, under use of all suitable means.”

(America’s religious roots that influenced civil liberties: showing clips from the HBO adaptation of David McCullough’s John Adams could help students understand the historical ramifications of religious liberty.⁹)

Application—20 minutes

*In the Ecclesial Method, the class now applies the concepts of the proclamation to concrete situations, either in their own life or in society. The **goal** is to help the participants/students understand how this truth applies to them. To have this truth bear fruit in their lives and lead them to a deeper conversion. Help them to see how they can live out what they have learned in a practical way and challenge them to apply it. Give examples on how they can **witness** to this truth. An important element of application is **service** – how Jesus served us is how we are to serve others.*

Activity 1

⁷ James Madison, “Property,” March 29, 1792, in *The Founding Fathers*, eds. Philip B. Kurland and Ralph Lerner (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), accessed March 27, 2012. <http://press-pubs.uchicago.edu/founders/documents/v1ch16s23.html>.

⁸ James Madison, “Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessment,” June 20, 1785, in *The Founding Fathers*, accessed March 27, 2012. http://press-pubs.uchicago.edu/founders/documents/amendI_religions43.html.

⁹ Teachers should ask for and receive a license to show copyrighted movies and/or television programs.

Read Sister Mary Ann Walsh's blog on exemptions to the HHS Mandate:

Amish, Ok. Catholics, No.

The Amish are exempt from the entire health care reform law. So are members of Medi-Share, a program of Christian Care Ministry. Yet, when the Catholic Church asks for a religious exemption from just one regulation issued under the law – the mandate that all employers, including religious institutions, must pay for sterilization and contraceptives, including abortion-inducing drugs – the Administration balks.

The government respects the First Amendment that guarantees the right to freely exercise one's religious beliefs, but only to a point. In the health care law it picks and chooses which beliefs it respects. The Amish do not believe in insurance, and the government understands. Christian Care Ministry believes people should form a religious community and pay medical bills for one another, and the government says okay. Yet when the Catholic Church opposes being forced to pay for services that violate its beliefs, the Administration says "tough." What is so special about this mandate that it cannot be touched? It was added after Congress passed the health care law and offers no exemption for religious charitable or educational institutions. It will not accept Catholic charities and schools as "religious enough" unless they hire only Catholics, serve only Catholics, have the narrow tax exempt status granted to houses of worship, and teach religion as their purpose.

Amazingly, this mandate has more force than the overall health care law. In fact recent regulations allow states to decide which "essential health benefits" to require in health plans, such as hospitalization, prescription drugs and pediatric services. At the same time, all insurance plans must include the objectionable services mentioned above. Here federal law trumps state law and threatens to fine into submission institutions that dare oppose it. The going rate is at least \$100 per day per employee.

What has the government got against the Catholic Church? Has it forgotten the contributions the church has made to the poor and needy for centuries?

Catholic elementary and secondary schools provide the only real alternative to public schools in many parts of the nation. Catholic colleges offer outstanding education, be it at the university or the community college. The contribution has a long history, back to 1789 when Georgetown University was founded by the Jesuits. Yet under the health care law, if these schools and colleges wish to remain faithful to their religious principles the government will fine them into submission. There's a thank-you note.

Many Catholic hospitals were founded by religious orders of women, and today one out of six persons seeking hospital care in the United States goes to a Catholic hospital. Until now, religious background of the patient has not been an issue. "Where does it hurt?" is the first question, not "Where is your baptismal certificate?" This approach threatens to deny hospitals any real protection as "religious employers" under the new rule. Yet their Catholicity means many of these hospitals have an added benefit. At Providence Hospital in Washington, DC, for example, patients not only get medical care, they can get clothing too if they need it. It comes through the Ladies of Charity, an auxiliary of the Daughters of Charity who founded the hospital in 1861.

Catholic social service agencies, including adoption and foster care agencies, parish food banks, and soup kitchens, meet human concerns. Services depend on need, not creed. Church sponsorship means the services have a little extra, be they volunteers from parishes, financial donations through diocesan appeals, or the dedication that comes from working for God as well as paycheck.

A Catholic might take personally the Administration's dissing their beliefs. Lucky the Amish, who have their basic constitutional rights respected. If only we objected to health insurance generally, we might be able to enjoy the same protection. Seems odd that the Administration is more inflexible on contraception than on services that actually treat disease.

<http://usccbmedia.blogspot.com/2012/03/amish-ok-catholics-no.html>

Answer the following questions in small groups to then consider during whole-class discussion:

1. What do we mean when we talk about the freedom to practice religion in America? (*Answer: See the lesson!*)
2. What is illogical about the United States Government's exemptions concerning the HHS Mandate? (*Answer: Reason and the United States Constitution are ignored as guidelines for the definition of exemptions as far as Catholics' conscientious objections are concerned.*)
3. And when should religious liberty yield to other values? (*Answer: It is the first freedom. It is limited by the common good of others or one's own impairment of conscience.*)

Conclusion and Celebration of our religious liberty--(5 minutes)

In the Ecclesial Method, the class ends with a restatement of the proclamation and reflections that students can take away with them as they live their faith.

Let us end with the *Prayer for the Protection of Religious Liberty*. This is the same prayer prayed at the end of Lesson A. Feel free to pray with your students in other ways that will also encourage them to take to heart and converse with God concerning what they have learned about religious liberty. The prayer card is in the additional resources of the unit plan's appendix.

II. Lessons

Lesson C—Religious Liberty according to Revelation

Lesson Summary:

The Church as the community of believers has the right to religious freedom to carry out the mission of Christ to proclaim the Gospel. The Church affirms the religious liberty of all persons. While not every person knows the true God, he has the right to seek the true God according to his own conscience. (Lesson C)

Objectives:

1. to define religious freedom through revelation
2. to affirm the believer's right to both public and private worship

Welcome and prayer, direct the focus of the students (5 minutes)

In the Ecclesial Method, the teacher provides for a time for students to leave behind the concerns of the day and focus on God's work in their lives. Particularly, the teacher makes a connection between what the students will learn and how this lesson is applicable to the students now. The class turns their minds and hearts to God in prayer.

Teacher says:

This lesson will explain our right to religious liberty through revelation. The Church and believers have the right and the duty to celebrate the mystery of Christ through public and private worship.

Teacher says:

Let us begin with a prayer from the Statement on Religious Liberty, "Our First, Most Cherished Liberty." This is the same prayer prayed at the beginning of Lesson A. Feel free to pray with your students in other ways that will also encourage them to take the intentions of religious liberty to heart in their conversations with God. Then read from the Scripture:

"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:19-20)

The Proclamation

In the Ecclesial Method, the point of the lesson is repeated throughout the lesson. It is the one statement that students should internalize and be able to explain after the lesson. This proclamation helps the participants/students to answer the question "What did you learn about today?" It should be short, well-phrased, clear truth from God, taught authoritatively, based on Scripture and Tradition, free from personal opinion and theological speculation.

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 (*Dignitatis Humanae* 13).

This proclamation is summarized in the first sentence. Repeat the first sentence to transition into the lesson.

The Church should enjoy that full measure of freedom which her care for salvation of men requires.

Explanation—(15 minutes)

In the Ecclesial Method, the terms of the Proclamation are explained, including related terms. The goal is to educate or draw out the meaning of the “good news” that just proclaimed.

- *Through a straightforward explanation which informs and inspires.*
- *Creatively, using audiovisual aids like worksheets, sacred art, diagrams; your testimony; study of a new prayer and/or Scripture verses that pertain to this truth; break into small groups to examine what this truth means; apologetics; memorization*
- *Use the power of image, story and word to fully engage students*
- *Answer participants’/students’ doubts and questions*

Objective 1: to define religious freedom through revelation.

Say: God has given us the gift or grace of faith and has revealed in the Scripture and in the teaching office of the Church how we are to serve him.

Our faith, based on God’s revelation, tells us how we are to serve God. How is religious liberty identifiable through divine revelation?

Answer: God revealed how men are to serve Him, through one true religion that subsists in the Catholic Church. We are bound to seek the truth, embrace it, and hold fast to it (*Dignitatis Humanae* 1).

Revelation—*Students may look up the following verses.*

This can be a matching activity, with the questions being answered by the scripture verse next to it in the table. Conversely, the students can have the verses and derive the questions.

<i>Who is the source of religious freedom?</i>	For freedom you have set us free in Christ Jesus (Gal 5:1).
<i>Who profits from the gift of religious freedom?</i>	Creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God (Romans 8:21).
<i>When God and government conflict, whom must the believer obey?</i>	But Peter and John replied, “Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God’s sight to obey you rather than God.” (Acts 4:19)

<i>What mission does Jesus give to the Church through the apostles?</i>	19 "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:19-20).
<i>Why does the Church act publicly? What is the reward for those who cared for the needy?</i>	"Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.'" (Matthew 25:34-36)
<i>How can a believer know whom to obey?</i>	Render to Caesar the things that belong to Caesar, but render to God the things that belong to God. (Mark 12:17)

The Church is the spiritual authority set up by Christ the Lord with the duty, imposed by divine command, of going out into the whole world and preaching the Gospel to every creature. Thus, the Church claims two kinds of freedom:

Teacher can use a grid to help the students take notes on the following. A copy is in the Handouts section.

<u>Social</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • right to freedom in every human society and before every public authority. • No state has the right to interfere with what the Church considers the mandate of the Son of God (given in Matthew 28:19). 	<u>Personal</u> right of freedom as being <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a society of men • who enjoy the right to live in civil society according to the tenets of the Christian faith.
<u>Hierarchical society</u> The divinely instituted authorities (pope, bishops, etc.) have the right to teach, govern and sanctify the faithful in the things that pertain to God.	<u>Composed of individual persons</u> Who have the correlative right to <i>be</i> taught, governed, and sanctified according to what faith tells them is the will of God.

Objective 2: to affirm the believer's right to both public and private worship.

Say: Men have the right as social beings to worship in a community.

The Catechism states:

2105 The duty of offering God genuine worship concerns man both individually and socially. This is "the traditional Catholic teaching on the moral duty of individuals and societies toward the true religion and the one Church of Christ."³⁰ By constantly evangelizing men, the Church works toward enabling them "to infuse the Christian spirit into the mentality and mores, laws and structures of the communities in which [they] live."³¹ The social duty of Christians is to respect and awaken in each man the love of the true and the good. It requires them to make known the worship of the one true religion which subsists in the Catholic and apostolic Church.³² Christians are called to be the light of the world. Thus,

the Church shows forth the kingship of Christ over all creation and in particular over human societies.³³

³⁰ *DH* 1 § 3.

³¹ *AA* 13 § 1.

³² Cf. *DH* 1.

³³ Cf. *AA* 13; Leo XIII, *Immortale Dei* 3,17; Pius XI, *Quas primas* 8,20.

The faithful should have as much liberty to follow their consciences as the state grants others to follow theirs.

For example, the United States Supreme Court has held that religious and non-religious organizations alike can receive federal funding to provide secular services that government deems important.¹⁰ The Supreme Court has made it clear that religious organizations are not disqualified from such collaborations merely because of their affiliation; what matters under the First Amendment's Establishment Clause is whether the organizations use government funds properly.

Until 2011, the federal government collaborated with the Catholic Church to provide human services to victims of human trafficking.¹¹ Unfortunately, the federal government decided not to renew this contract because the Church refused to help facilitate or fund abortion or contraceptive "services" for those victims.

The Church simply seeks to protect the right of every human being to pursue, without constraint, the call to holiness. This means, among other things, the freedom to carry out the Gospel mandate that every person is to be welcomed by the disciple as if he or she were Christ Himself. Religious liberty includes the Church's ability to make its contribution to the common good of all Americans without having to compromise principles of the Catholic faith.

Questions:

- What is the difference between religious freedom and freedom of worship?
 - **Religious freedom** is the ability of any believer to seek the true God and to obey the demands of God as they understand Him, following the voice of their conscience. For Catholics, this involves following the commands of the Lord Jesus, which gives the faithful a mission to "go out," to serve the needs of others, to give them the gift of baptism and the sacraments.

¹⁰ See *Bowen v. Kendrick*, 487 U.S. 589 (1988).

¹¹ See <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/religious-liberty/discrimination-against-catholic-humanitarian-services.cfm>.

- **Freedom of worship** means that a person may give God the homage due. For Catholics, this includes coming together to worship Him as a community, participating in the Mass, and praying publicly or privately.
- **Teacher Reference:**
Some wish to reduce religious freedom to freedom of worship, and freedom of worship to acts that are done by an individual, in private. Catholics understand that each term is broader, including both public and private spheres, and both social and personal freedom. Religious liberty is not only about our ability to go to Mass on Sunday or pray the Rosary at home. It is about whether we can make our contribution to the common good of all Americans. Can we do the good works our faith calls us to do, without having to compromise that very same faith? Without religious liberty properly understood, all Americans suffer, deprived of the essential contribution in education, health care, feeding the hungry, civil rights, and social services that religious Americans make every day, both here at home and overseas. (Our First, Most Cherished Freedom)

Application—20 minutes

*In the Ecclesial Method, the class now applies the concepts of the proclamation to concrete situations, either in their own life or in society. The **goal** is to help the participants/students understand how this truth applies to them. To have this truth bear fruit in their lives and lead them to a deeper conversion. Help them to see how they can live out what they have learned in a practical way and challenge them to apply it. Give examples on how they can **witness** to this truth. An important element of application is **service** – how Jesus served us is how we are to serve others.*

In groups or in class discussion, answer the questions from the Reflections for the Fortnight for Freedom (see additional resources for link), Days 12, 13 and 14.

- 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?
- In the United States, religious freedom is protected in the Constitution and in federal and state statutes, as Vatican Council II desires. Are those legal protections enough?
- What else, apart from the law, can strengthen or weaken religious liberty?
- What should Catholics do to defend and foster religious liberty in America today?
- Since 1965, has religious freedom improved or deteriorated throughout the world?
- What is the relationship between the Catholic Church’s religious liberty and growing religious diversity, as well as increasing interactions among people of different faiths?

Activity: View trailer and clips from the movie *God’s Not Dead*.¹² This Protestant Christian movie illustrates the challenges that adolescents sometimes face in secular academic environments. It illustrates how easy it is to begin to believe that one’s faith is completely a private matter. The nuances of the movie should provide opportunities for lively discussion. Some students will be able

¹² Teachers should ask for and receive a license to show copyrighted movies and/or television programs.

to add a Catholic perspective to the plot that will emphasize the importance of courage in action and appeal to students' understanding of the dignity of the human person in all situations. The two links to YouTube clips should be prefaced by the teachers' summary of the movie. Seeing the entire movie is not recommended since points pertinent to this lesson can be made concisely and effectively in summary:

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=90PWFEeRApA>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dc5s1ZKNmcc>

After seeing the movie and clips, small groups could discuss how they would handle a similar situation in which their beliefs were challenged the way that the main character's beliefs were questioned. The following questions could be used to generate thoughtful discussion:

- How do you react to pressure when your faith in God is mocked?
- Do you pray for people who attack or belittle your faith or do those people anger you in such a way that you ignore them or retaliate in anger without considering the reasons for their positions?
- Do you really believe that the way you react to adversity of this sort impacts other people?

Optional Lyrical Applications:

Examine the text of the song, “America the Beautiful” by Katherine Lee Bates for an expression of the points of this lesson.¹³

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>1 O beautiful for spacious skies,
For amber waves of grain,
For purple mountain majesties
Above the fruited plain!
America! America!
God shed his grace on thee
And crown thy good with brotherhood
<i>community</i>
From sea to shining sea!</p> | <p><i>God has given us the gift or grace of faith
Men have the right as social beings to worship in a</i></p> |
| <p>2 O beautiful for pilgrim feet
Whose stern impassioned stress
A thoroughfare for freedom beat
Across the wilderness!
America! America!
God mend thine ev'ry flaw,
Confirm the soul in self control,
Thy liberty in law!</p> | <p><i>Persons who came to this land for religious freedom in community
The freedom the pilgrims sought was primarily religious freedom
Due limits—persons commit sin, and violate their conscience
Morality can strengthen religious liberty
Religious liberty is protected by the Constitution</i></p> |
| <p>3 O beautiful for heroes proved</p> | |

¹³ If music from a DVD or a streaming source is to be performed, the teacher should ask for and receive a license for that public performance.

In liberating strife.
Who more than self their country loved
And mercy more than life! *Serving the poor and needy through works of mercy for Christ's sake*
America! America!
May God thy gold refine
Till all success be nobleness
And every gain divine!

Another example would be the song, “In God We Still Trust,” performed by the country music band Diamond Rio, which also expresses the points of this lesson. See if you can identify themes similar to those identified for you in “America the Beautiful.”

If the teachers knows the group well and humor can be integrated into the lesson in a meaningful way, the following imaginary scenario might be entertaining to students and make an interesting transition to the biographies of the saints who were unable to ignore what they believed was necessary for them to do in following the will of God:

A basic idea regarding religious liberty: it is the right to seek the truth and follow it as one has discovered it. Analogy: Brooklyn street musician Polly is trying to find the original, yes, the original, piano chords to “Don’t Stop Believin’.” Polly finds them -- in the basement of a music store on Peter Street. Polly rightfully rejoices in this discovery, playing and recording the music. Two days later, Justin [a.k.a., the Apostate or...the Bieber] tells Polly that a) those chords are not as good as Taylor Swift’s latest release; b) there is no way she can know she has Journey’s chords so she must not impose that dogmatism on Brooklyn pedestrians. Polly must, according to Justin, stop playing those chords and play what people need to hear—Taylor’s jam. Polly thinks to herself: “As a musician, I cannot play other than what I consider the best, the truest version of Journey. It is that or nothing. I shall take my music elsewhere if I cannot play the truest tune I have found.”

Just so, the human person -- qua being endowed with mind and will -- cannot be forced to live in a manner that contradicts the truth.

Application in the life of six saints who served God in the United States

Throughout the history of the Catholic Church, devout Christians have courageously defended their Faith when government authorities have forced them to deny their consciences and the teachings of the Catholic Church. St. Thomas More is an example of a civil leader who loved his country, served it well, but would not deny the teachings of Christ to please a temporal government’s leader.

Many Catholics during the early history of the United States suffered prejudice and intolerant attitudes on the part of civic leaders as they tried to care for and educate marginalized people in our country. None of the American saints listed below were martyred, but they were often ridiculed and treated harshly as they tried to perform spiritual and corporal works of mercy.

Take time to read or watch how they persevered in their work and made sure that their Catholic Faith found a voice through their efforts. Identify at least one way that each saint challenged social and legal confines of his or her time to carry out Christ's work in the United States.

St. Frances Xavier Cabrini

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FDT_WbRPzE4

St. Rose Philippine Duchesne

<http://saints.sqpn.com/saint-rose-philippine-duchesne/>

St. Elizabeth Seton

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QgIuhEj1rpA>

St. Theodore Guerin

<http://spsmw.org/2015/01/14/our-immigrant-saint-saint-mother-theodore-guerin-moment/>

St. John Neumann

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jnS105UJ1Fw>

St. Katharine Drexel

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c5pep6m9oMg>

Conclusion and Celebration of our religious liberty--(5 minutes)

In the Ecclesial Method, the class ends with a restatement of the proclamation and reflections that students can take away with them as they live their faith.

Say: Pope Benedict XVI's called for "the need for an engaged, articulate and well-formed Catholic laity," who approach threats against religious liberty with critical judgment and courage in action.

Repeat the proclamation.

The Church should enjoy that full measure of freedom which her care for salvation of men requires.

Say: Let us pray for that full measure of freedom which the Church needs to care for the salvation of souls.

II. Lessons

Lesson D —Rights and Duties of the Church in Society

Lesson Summary:

The Church as the community of believers has the right to religious freedom to carry out the mission of Christ to proclaim the Gospel. The Church affirms the religious liberty of all persons. While not every person knows the true God, he has the right to seek the true God according to his own conscience.

Objectives:

1. to affirm the right of the Church to exist and act in society
2. to explain the freedom of the Catholic Church to carry out Christ's mission
3. to understand religious liberty of all persons in harmony with the freedom of the Catholic Church

Welcome and prayer, direct the focus of the students (5 minutes)

In the Ecclesial Method, the teacher provides for a time for students to leave behind the concerns of the day and focus on God's work in their lives. Particularly, the teacher makes a connection between what the students will learn and how this lesson is applicable to the students now. The class turns their minds and hearts to God in prayer.

Teacher says:

This lesson will explain the rights and duties of the Church with respect to civil government. Supporting the honest search for truth for each human person does not interfere with the teaching and practice of the Catholic Church nor does such an emphasis present a threat to a legitimately established government. The Catholic Church is not an enemy of good government. The Catholic Church is an ally of good government, so when government threatens truth and love, the Church reminds governmental authorities to respect the common good.

Teacher says:

Let us begin with a prayer from the USCCB Statement on Religious Liberty, "Our First, Most Cherished Liberty." This is the same prayer prayed at the beginning of Lesson A. (Feel free to pray with your students in other ways that will also encourage them to take the intentions of religious liberty to heart in their conversations with God.)

Then read from the Scripture:

"When they had brought them in and made them stand before the Sanhedrin, the high priest questioned them, 'We gave you strict orders [did we not?] to stop teaching in that name. Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and want to bring this man's blood upon us.' But Peter and the apostles said in reply, 'We must obey God rather than men...' But a

Pharisee in the Sanhedrin named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law, respected by all the people, stood up, ordered the men to be put outside for a short time, and said to them, ‘Fellow Israelites, be careful what you are about to do to these men. Some time ago, Theudas appeared, claiming to be someone important, and about four hundred men joined him, but he was killed, and all those who were loyal to him were disbanded and came to nothing. After him came Judas the Galilean at the time of the census. He also drew people after him, but he too perished and all who were loyal to him were scattered. So now I tell you, have nothing to do with these men, and let them go. For if this endeavor or this activity is of human origin, it will destroy itself. But if it comes from God, you will not be able to destroy them; you may even find yourselves fighting against God.’ They were persuaded by him.” (Acts 5:27-29, 34-39)

The Proclamation

In the Ecclesial Method, the point of the lesson is repeated throughout the lesson. It is the one statement that students should internalize and be able to explain after the lesson. This proclamation helps the participants/students to answer the question “What did you learn about today?” It should be short, well-phrased, clear truth from God, taught authoritatively, based on Scripture and Tradition, free from personal opinion and theological speculation.

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 (*Dignitatis Humanae* 13).

This proclamation is summarized in the first sentence. Repeat the first sentence to transition into the lesson.

The Church should enjoy that full measure of freedom which her care for salvation of men requires.

Explanation—(15 minutes)

In the Ecclesial Method, the terms of the Proclamation are explained, including related terms. The goal is to educate or draw out the meaning of the “good news” that just proclaimed.

- *Through a straightforward explanation which informs and inspires.*
- *Creatively, using audiovisual aids like worksheets, sacred art, diagrams; your testimony; study of a new prayer and/or Scripture verses that pertain to this truth; break into small groups to examine what this truth means; apologetics; memorization*
- *Use the power of image, story and word to fully engage students*
- *Answer participants’/students’ doubts and questions*

Objective 1: to affirm the right of the Church to exist and act in society

Is religious liberty a public or private liberty?

In seeking that religious liberty be recognized, the Church is asking what other societies within the state ask—their opportunity to foster the welfare of civil society. The Church seeks the freedom to bear witness to Christ and to teach the faith.

Questions:

- Is religious freedom limited to the private lives of believers? *Answer—religious freedom has to do with immunity from coercion in civil society (Dignitatis Humanae 1). Thus the believer is to be free to worship God and to speak about Him, to act according to His laws, to worship in community according to man’s social nature.*
- Why do the faithful take their faith out to the society by charitable organizations? *Answer—to fulfill the mission given them by Christ, to treat the poor as they would treat Christ Himself.*
- Does this public exercise of charity infringe on the rights of members of other faiths? *Answer—The Church may offer her charity, but may not impose it on others.*

A further point is that the family has the right to religious liberty both as the building unit of society and the domestic church. Parents have the right to educate their children in the faith. The rights of parents are violated:

- if children are forced to attend lesson or instructions which are not in agreement with their religious beliefs.
- if a single system of education, from which all religious formation is excluded, is imposed on all.

Objective 2: to explain the freedom of the Church to carry out Christ’s mission

Separation of Church and State cannot mean subordination of Church to State.

The Church wants and demands not only juridical but real liberty. The Church asks of the government state conditions that provide for the Church’s independence in carrying out her mission. There is no contradiction between Christian liberty and that religious liberty which must be recognized as a right of all men and all communities, and given safeguards in the external legal order. *What those safeguards should be are described in Lesson C.*

Religious liberty includes the freedom of the faithful to carry out the commands of Christ, one of which is to preach the Gospel, a public mission. In the Gospel, believers are commanded to help those in need. We as Americans contribute to the common good through our charitable acts, thus building up our country.

For further reference, see Thomas Jefferson’s correspondence with Ursuline Sisters from Louisiana, who were concerned that their religious liberty would not be supported after

Louisiana became part of the U.S. in 1804
(http://www.churchstatelaw.com/historicalmaterials/8_8_12.asp).

From Thomas Jefferson to Ursuline Nuns of New Orleans, 13 July 1804

To the Soeur Therese de St. Xavier Farjon Superior, and the Nuns of the order of St. Ursula at New Orleans

I have received, holy sisters, the letter you have written me wherein you express anxiety for the property vested in your institution by the former governments of Louisiana. The principles of the constitution and government of the United states are a sure guarantee to you that it will be preserved to you sacred and inviolate, and that your institution will be permitted to govern itself according to its own voluntary rules, without interference from the civil authority. Whatever diversity of shade may appear in the religious opinions of our fellow citizens, the charitable objects of your institution cannot be indifferent to any; and it's furtherance of the wholesome purposes of society, by training up its younger members in the way they should go, cannot fail to ensure it the patronage of the government it is under. Be assured it will meet all the protection which my office can give it.

I salute you, holy sisters, with friendship & respect. Thomas Jefferson

Objective 3: to understand that the freedom of the Catholic Church is in harmony with the religious liberty of all persons who seek the true God.

The Catechism states: [Religious liberty] does not contradict a “sincere respect” for different religions which frequently “reflect a ray of that truth which enlightens all men,”²⁸ nor the requirement of charity, which urges Christians “to treat with love, prudence and patience those who are in error or ignorance with regard to the faith.”²⁹ (CCC 2104)

Teacher reference: The Lord Jesus came to liberate us from the dominion of sin. Political liberties are one part of that liberation, and religious liberty is the first of those liberties. Together with our fellow Christians, joined by our Jewish brethren, and in partnership with Americans of other religious traditions, we affirm that our faith requires us to defend the religious liberty granted us by God, and protected in our Constitution (Our First, Most Cherished Liberty).

Key point:

Catholics can work with fellow citizens for the common good of all, and welcome the opportunity to foster understanding of the truths of the Faith by building relationships with those of other religions.

That is the teaching of our Catholic faith, which obliges us to work together with fellow citizens for the common good of all who live in this land (Our First, Most Cherished Liberty, USCCB Ad hoc committee for Religious Liberty).

The Catechism also states: 2107 “If because of the circumstances of a particular people special civil recognition is given to one religious community in the constitutional organization of a state, the right of all citizens and religious communities to religious freedom must be recognized and respected as well.”³⁶

³⁶ DH 6 § 3.

Have students rephrase this paragraph in their own words and share with a partner. Then, the teacher may ask for volunteers to share their paraphrase, as a way to check for understanding. This means that even if the government recognizes a certain religious group, such as the Lutheran Church in Sweden, the government still must recognize the rights of Catholics and other religious groups.

Key point:

Secular society and government often have a much wider interpretation and definition of what a religion is. However, in the Christian tradition, not all “religions” possess the elements of a true religion, i.e., worship of God. Not all religions have “rights” in public order, because they are not ordered to the reign of Christ. Especially does religion refer to the highest, spiritual good. Those cults that have as their end some created thing are not truly religions, as understood in the Christian tradition.

Question:

What are some groups that have as their end something material, and thus are not strictly “religions” as understood in the Christian tradition? *Answer—Wicca, tarot cards, palm readers, nature worship.*

Are such groups or individuals entitled to “religious liberty”? *Answer—according to the definition of religion they do not, but they have freedom to seek truth, and the Church cannot force them to convert to the truth, but can present the truth to them in hopes that they will embrace it and the happiness that comes with the true faith. Under U.S. law, such distinctions are not made, but people engaged in such practices would generally have to show that these are “deeply” or “sincerely held religious beliefs” in order to be entitled to religious liberty protection.*

Application—20 minutes

*In the Ecclesial Method, the class now applies the concepts of the proclamation to concrete situations, either in their own life or in society. The **goal** is to help the participants/students understand how this truth applies to them. To have this truth bear fruit in their lives and lead them to a deeper conversion. Help them to see how they can live out what they have learned in a practical way and challenge them to apply it. Give examples on how they can **witness** to this truth. An important element of application is **service** – how Jesus served us is how we are to serve others.*

Have pairs of students research a current concern for religious liberty, especially by examining <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/religious-liberty/> or another reliable source of information on this topic, such as <http://www.becketfund.org/>. Each pair should be able to summarize the information that they read and explain how it threatens or promotes religious liberty. If there are time constraints, the following article may be read and discussed by the whole class:

Protecting health care professionals' freedom of conscience

In Ontario, Canada, the College of Physicians and Surgeons is deciding whether patients' "rights" to abortion should trump the conscience rights of pro-life physicians. Some are saying that "physicians unwilling to provide or facilitate abortion for reasons of conscience should not be family physicians." Pro-life leaders have argued that if the College does this, then "ethical cleansing of Ontario's medical profession will begin this year, ridding it of practitioners unwilling to do what they believe to be wrong."

Pro-life nurses in the United States have faced similar challenges. For example, Cathy DeCarlo, an operating room nurse at New York's Mt. Sinai Hospital, was forced to assist with a late-term abortion against her conscience. It turns out that she is not alone; nurses in other parts of the U.S. have faced the same "choice": participate in an abortion, or be fired.

- See more at:

http://www.mercatornet.com/articles/view/protecting-doctors-freedom-of-conscience?utm_source=twitterfeed&utm_medium=twitter&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+mercatornet%2Fsite_rss+%28MercatorNet%29#sthash.qzgtazI2.dpuf

<http://www.usccb.org/about/pro-life-activities/life-issues-forum/life-issues-forum-stand-with-sr-jane-marie.cfm>

Conclusion and Celebration of our religious liberty--(5 minutes)

In the Ecclesial Method, the class ends with a restatement of the proclamation and reflections that students can take away with them as they live their faith.

Say: Pope Benedict XVI's called for of "the need for an engaged, articulate and well-formed Catholic laity" who approach threats against religious liberty with critical judgment and courage in action.

Repeat the proclamation.

The Church should enjoy that full measure of freedom which her care for salvation of men requires.

Say: Let us pray for that full measure of freedom which the Church needs to care for the salvation of souls. Let us end with the *Prayer for the Protection of Religious Liberty*. This is the same prayer prayed at the end of Lesson A. **(Feel free to pray with your students in other ways that will also encourage them to take to heart and converse with God concerning what they have learned about religious liberty.)** The prayer card is in the additional resources of the unit plan's appendix.

II. Lessons

LESSON E: Duties of the State regarding Religious Liberty

Because religious liberty is man's first and highest freedom, it is the duty of the government to protect this freedom. Religious liberty is when the civil society recognizes the natural ordering of every person to seek the true and highest good. Government can neither force a person to violate his conscience nor prevent a person from acting according to his religious beliefs. Government also has the duty to foster the religious life of its citizens, for the sake of the persons that government serves, and for the improving of society through growth in peace, justice and virtue. This means that government has the duty to see that all persons are treated equally, preventing one religious body from violating the consciences of other persons or the rights of other religious communities.

Objectives:

1. to understand religious liberty in the context of a civil right
2. to define rights and duties of the government
3. to state what protecting religious liberty requires of the government and of believers

Welcome and prayer, direct the focus of the students (5 minutes)

In the Ecclesial Method, the teacher provides for a time for students to leave behind the concerns of the day and focus on God's work in their lives. Particularly, the teacher makes a connection between what the students will learn and how this lesson is applicable to the students now. The class turns their minds and hearts to God in prayer.

Teacher says:

To be Catholic and American should mean not having to choose one over the other. Our allegiances are distinct, but they need not be contradictory, and should instead be complementary. That is the vision of our founding and our Constitution, which guarantees citizens of all religious faiths the right to contribute to our common life together (Our First, Most Cherished Liberty, USCCB Ad Hoc Committee for Religious Liberty).

Teacher says:

Let us begin with a prayer from the USCCB Statement on Religious Liberty, "Our First, Most Cherished Liberty." This is the same prayer prayed at the beginning of Lesson A. (Feel free to pray with your students in other ways that will also encourage them to take the intentions of religious liberty to heart in their conversations with God.)

The Questions *to stimulate interest and demonstrate the need for this lesson:*

Ask: *Drawing on the two previous lessons, the students should be able to address these three situations.*

In a pluralistic society, questions of religious liberty can be over-simplified or filtered through a lens of simple equal treatment or lack of clear understanding of what is the practice and exercise of religion. The following examples should help students to understand the application of principles that they have already studied and discussed.

Say:

In the U.S., people seem free to practice religion openly. *The students may give examples of such instances. Here are three.*

- Religious sisters can wear their habits in public.
- People pray together on public property at candlelight vigils after acts of violence that have shaken a community.
- All the traffic in Washington, D.C. is diverted for the annual Pro-Life March on or around January 22.

Ask:

Is religious liberty under attack? *Students may refer to examples that they wrote about as they began Lesson A or may be able to relate current events they have learned about.*

The bullets list three recent laws, mandates, or court rulings. See Printout “Current Threats to Religious Liberty” for one-page listing of these and other attacks on religious liberty.

- *HHS mandate for contraception, sterilization, and abortion-inducing drugs.* The federal government will force religious institutions to facilitate and fund a product contrary to their own moral teaching. It also purports to define which religious institutions are “religious enough” to merit protection of their religious liberty.
- *State immigration laws* prevent Catholic parishes from attending to the spiritual needs and requests for sacraments for illegal immigrants and their children.
- *Christian students’ group* on campus is forbidden from excluding from membership students who reject the Christian moral code.

The Proclamation

In the Ecclesial Method, the point of the lesson is repeated throughout the lesson. It is the one statement that students should internalize and be able to explain after the lesson. This proclamation helps the participants/students to answer the question “What did you learn about today?” It should be short, well-phrased, clear truth from God, taught authoritatively, based on Scripture and Tradition, free from personal opinion and theological speculation.

We have been staunch defenders of religious liberty in the past. We have a solemn duty to discharge that duty today.

We need, therefore, to speak frankly with each other when our freedoms are threatened. Now is such a time. As Catholic bishops and American citizens, we address an urgent summons to our fellow Catholics and fellow Americans to be on guard, for religious liberty is under attack, both at home and abroad. (Our First, Most Cherished Liberty)

This proclamation is summarized in the first two sentences. Repeat the first two sentences to transition into the lesson.

We have been staunch defenders of religious liberty in the past. We have a solemn duty to discharge that duty today.

Explanation—(15 minutes)

*In the Ecclesial Method, the terms of the Proclamation are explained, including related terms. The **goal** is to educate or draw out the meaning of the “good news” that just proclaimed.*

- *Through a straightforward explanation which informs and inspires.*
- *Creatively, using audiovisual aids like worksheets, sacred art, diagrams; your testimony; study of a new prayer and/or Scripture verses that pertain to this truth; break into small groups to examine what this truth means; apologetics; memorization*
- *Use the power of image, story and word to fully engage students*
- *Answer participants’/students’ doubts and questions*

Objective 1: to understand religious liberty in the context of a civil right

The Catechism states: [2108](#) The right to religious liberty is neither a moral license to adhere to error, nor a supposed right to error,³⁷ but rather a **natural right** of the human person to civil liberty, i.e., immunity, within just limits, from external constraint in religious matters by political authorities. This natural right ought to be acknowledged in the juridical order of society in such a way that it constitutes a **civil right**.³⁸

37 Cf. Leo XIII, *Libertas praestantissimum* 18; Pius XII *AAS* 1953,799.

38 Cf. *DH* 2.

How is Religious Liberty a civil right? CCC 1951: “All law finds its first and ultimate truth in the eternal law.”

Rights come from natural law. Natural law comes from the eternal law of God who created all natural things.

CCC 1954: “The natural law expresses the original moral sense which enables man to discern by reason the good and the evil, the truth and the lie: “The natural law is written and engraved in the soul of each and every man, because it is human reason ordaining him to do good and forbidding him to sin...”

CCC 1952: Eternal law is “the source, in God, of all law...”

Declaration of Independence:

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.--That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, --That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to affect their Safety and Happiness.”

Rights come from God and are intrinsic to our nature as He created it. Such natural rights ought to be **recognized** and **protected** by civil law. But the state only recognizes and protects natural rights. The state does not **grant** natural rights. God does.

When African Americans were fighting for civil rights in the mid-20th century, they were trying to get civil law to be in line with natural law. Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. rooted his legal and constitutional arguments about justice in the long Christian tradition. In other words, African Americans sought civil rights that would reflect their natural rights. Freedom of religion is a civil right, but even more basically, it is a natural right. Natural law says that every human person ought to have the freedom to worship God.

Notably, proponents of same-sex “marriage” often attempt to equate this issue with the civil rights struggles of African Americans. But the two issues are very different. Same-sex unions do not square with natural law, whereas laws that discriminated against African Americans were out of harmony with natural law.

Objective 2: to define rights and duties of the government

Implications of religious liberty in the United States

1. The Church requires the independence necessary to fulfill her divine mission. She asks what other societies in the United States ask: to foster the welfare of civil society.
2. Christians have the same civil right as other men to be free in conducting their lives according to their consciences.
3. Believers must neither **force** others to believe or live according to the moral code nor be forced to **believe** or **act** against their moral code.
4. Government may neither force believers to violate their beliefs nor prevent them from morally acting and worshipping according to their beliefs.

Core Principles that should guide the government in formalizing religious freedom into law: (*found in the Appendix*)

Label the principles as follows. Some principles may apply to more than one group:

G: applies to the government

I: applies to the individual believer

Ch: applies to the Church as a whole

- Do not require what conscience forbids, or forbid what conscience requires: *G, I, Ch*
- Religious freedom should be exercised individually and communally, in private and public: *I, Ch, G*

- Parents have the right and responsibility to direct the religious upbringing of their children: *I*
- Internal affairs of religious organizations are recognized as such, including in the:
 - Selection and training of ministers: *Ch*
 - Ability to own buildings, money and other property: *Ch*
 - Right to teach and witness: *I, Ch*
- No discrimination based on religion – even if there is an established state religion: *G*
- Government should acknowledge religion and show it favor, but should not command or inhibit religious acts: *G*
- Right to express religion in the public square: *G*
 - Likewise, religions must acknowledge their limits within a free society:
- Avoid coercion in evangelization: *I, Ch*
- Exercise with civility and responsibility: *Ch, I*
- Do not abuse legitimate religious freedom: *Ch, I*
- Acknowledge “due limits” for a “just public order”: *Gov, I, Ch*

These are the principles outlined by *Dignitatis Humanae*. The next part of the lesson is to see that for each of these rights, there is a corresponding duty. Only some of the principles will be examined. An extension can be to look at each of the principles. For example, if a religious group were abusing their freedom and forcing another group to worship against their conscience, then the government would have to intervene for the sake of justice and the common good.

Objective 3: to state what protecting religious liberty requires of the government and of believers

What the government must do:

Principle: Do not require what conscience forbids, or forbid what conscience requires: *G, I, Ch*

Question: How does the HHS mandate violate this principle? Answer: Catholics cannot endorse or provide contraception, sterilization, or abortion-inducing drugs.

Principle: Internal affairs of religious organizations are recognized as such, including in the:

- Selection and training of ministers: *Ch*
- Ability to own buildings, money and other property: *Ch*
- Right to teach and witness: *I, Ch*

Question: How was this violated in Communist countries? Answer: *the state set up a church, then controlled it by choosing its ministers, telling the preachers what they could talk about, closing churches if the ministers did not comply.*

Principle: Government should acknowledge religion and show it favor, but it should not command or inhibit religious acts.

Questions:

- Must the government promote each religious body or society? *Answer—No. It has only the duty to provide the stable conditions in society that allow the common good to flourish.*
- Must the government grant every group recognition or benefits? *Answer—“Differentiating between persons or refusing social recognition or benefits is unacceptable only when it is contrary to justice.” For example, “[t]he denial of the social and legal status of marriage to forms of cohabitation that are not and cannot be marital is not opposed to justice; on the contrary, justice requires it.” AAS 96 (2004), 48.*

What individual believers and the Church must do:

The government may make laws that violate a person’s conscience, even if the law does not violate religious liberty. The law may be just, in which case the person has the right of conscientious objection. Or the law may be unjust, in which case the person has the duty not to obey it, even to the point of suffering for not complying.

Right of conscientious objection:

When a government enacts a just law that goes against the conscience of an individual, that individual has the right to object to that law. For example, a person who objects in conscience to bearing arms in our nation’s military has the right not to bear arms, though he may have to serve in the army in another capacity, possibly as a medical assistant, or radio operator.

In a case dating back to 1935, a ten-year-old Jehovah’s Witness student named Billy Gobitas wrote a letter to his local school board stating that he refused to salute the American flag because of his religion. Jehovah’s Witnesses believe that saluting any flag is a form of worship forbidden by their religion. Billy’s public school expelled him and his sister for insubordination. In 1940, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled against the Gobitas family and upheld the school board’s action.¹⁴ However, just three years later, the Supreme Court reconsidered its decision and held in a separate case¹⁵ that the right of free speech guaranteed in the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution denies the government the authority to compel the saluting of the American flag or the recitation of the pledge of allegiance.

In a more recent case,¹⁶ Christian graduate student Julea Ward was expelled from her academic program in counseling because she objected to being in a situation where she would have to “affirm” a potential counselee’s same-sex relationship. Although a trial court sided with her school (Eastern Michigan University), an appeals court in 2012 reversed the lower court’s decision and sided with Julea. The court found that a reasonable jury could conclude that Julea’s professors ejected her from the counseling program because of hostility toward her speech and faith.

¹⁴ *Minersville School District v. Gobitis*, 310 U.S. 586 (1940). (Due to a scrivener’s error, Billy’s last name was misspelled in the official case name.)

¹⁵ *West Virginia State Board of Education v. Barnette*, 319 U.S. 624 (1943).

¹⁶ *Ward v. Polite*, 667 F.3d 727 (6th Cir. 2012).

Questions:

- What happens when government requires something that a person cannot, in good conscience, do? *Answer-- that individual has the right to object to that law. But because it is a law, he may have to suffer a consequence.*
- Why does the believing individual have the duty to object to an unjust law? *Answer--no one is to be forced to act in a manner contrary to his own beliefs (DH 2).*
- *Answer—Duty of civil disobedience: When a government enacts an **unjust law**, unjust because it violates the human dignity of the citizens or exceeds its authority, the citizens have a duty to disobey that law, for in a sense, it is no law, not having its foundation in the sources of law—divine or natural.*

Teacher Reference:

Many of you have pointed out that concerted efforts have been made to deny the right of conscientious objection on the part of Catholic individuals and institutions with regard to cooperation in intrinsically evil practices. Others have spoken to me of a worrying tendency to reduce religious freedom to mere freedom of worship without guarantees of respect for freedom of conscience (Pope Benedict XVI, ad limina address to bishops of the US, January 19, 2012).

Question:

Is there ever a time when the government can order something that is against a person's conscience?

The Catechism says: [2109](#) The right to religious liberty can of itself be neither unlimited nor limited only by a “public order” conceived in a positivist or naturalist manner.³⁹ The “due limits” which are inherent in it must be determined for each social situation by political prudence, according to the requirements of the common good, and ratified by the civil authority in accordance with “legal principles which are in conformity with the objective moral order.”⁴⁰

39 Cf. Pius VI, *Quod aliquantum* (1791) 10; Pius IX, *Quanta cura* 3.

40 DH 7 § 3.

The following is repeated from Lesson A:

“Due limits”— *Dignitatis Humanae* 2 states that even religious freedom is subject to “due limits.”

Ask: If parents have the right to educate their children according to their religious beliefs, when can the government intervene in other decisions made by the parents?

The common good of one party can outweigh the consciences of another party.

For example, if someone's religion demands human sacrifice, the common good of protecting human life outweighs the conscience of the person seeking to sacrifice the life of another human being.

A conscience can be wrongly formed or compromised by mental illness.

Or the case when someone's wrongly formed conscience or conscience compromised by mental illness leads them to perform acts that are generally considered criminal, like kidnapping and rape as in the case of Elizabeth Smart,

the 14-year-old who was kidnapped in Utah in 2002 by a man who claimed to be acting on “religious” beliefs to take another wife.

However, in the case of a person who is acting for the common good according to a true conscience, government may neither force believers to violate their beliefs nor prevent them from morally acting and worshipping according to their beliefs. Believers must neither **force** others to believe or live according to the moral code nor be forced to **believe** or **act** against their moral code.

End the section of explanation by repeating the proclamation:

We have been staunch defenders of religious liberty in the past. We have a solemn duty to discharge that duty today.

Application—20 minutes

*In the Ecclesial Method, the class now applies the concepts of the proclamation to concrete situations, either in their own life or in society. The **goal** is to help the participants/students understand how this truth applies to them. To have this truth bear fruit in their lives and lead them to a deeper conversion. Help them to see how they can live out what they have learned in a practical way and challenge them to apply it. Give examples on how they can **witness** to this truth. An important element of application is **service** – how Jesus served us is how we are to serve others.*

In a nutshell, religious liberty means that no one can **force** a person to act against his beliefs or **prevent** him from following his conscience.

Here is one example of each:

Being forced to act against beliefs—2 Maccabees 7:1-42 is a stunning record of hideous tortures used against a mother and her seven sons to force them to eat pork in violation of the covenant with God.

⁷After the first brother had died in this manner, they brought the second to be made sport of. After tearing off the skin and hair of his head, they asked him, “Will you eat the pork rather than have your body tortured limb by limb?” ⁸Answering in the language of his ancestors, he said, “Never!” So he in turn suffered the same tortures as the first. ⁹With his last breath he said: “You accursed fiend, you are depriving us of this present life, but the King of the universe will raise us up* to live again forever, because we are dying for his laws.”

Being prevented from acting according to beliefs—One account among many possible events is that of St. Cecilia, who converted her husband Valerian to Christianity. He in turn convinced his brother Tibertius to embrace the faith.

The instructions of the wise bishop permeated the soul of Valerian, and both he and his brother Tiburtius believed in Christ and were converted to Christianity. The brothers distributed part of their inheritance to the poor, cared for the sick, and buried Christians tortured to death by the persecutors.

The governor Almachius, having learned of this, gave orders to arrest the brothers and bring them to trial. He demanded that the saints renounce Christ and offer sacrifice to the pagan gods, and the brothers refused. Then they mercilessly began to scourge the brothers. St Valerian under torture urged Christians not to be afraid of torments, but to stand firm for Christ. <http://www.reu.org/public/saints/VALERIAN.HTM>

Modern Situations: *Students are now ready to compare the three scenarios given at the beginning of this lesson. For each case, ask the three questions:*

- What is the duty of government?
- Is the individual or group being forced to violate their conscience?
- Is the individual or group being prevented from acting on their religious beliefs?

Note to the teacher: the students may ask many questions and want to discuss contraception in more depth. The focus of the discussion and essential objectives for this lesson relate to Religious Liberty. For more information on Love and Sexuality, please see <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/love-and-sexuality/>

Ask: *Returning to the printout “Current Threats to Religious Liberty”, consider the cases, applying the principles from Dignitatis Humanae, or use the same three questions given for the modern situations.*

What is the injustice in each decision? The first one has been answered by Archbishop Lori.

- HHS mandate for contraception, sterilization, and abortion-inducing drugs.* In an unprecedented way, the federal government will both force religious institutions to facilitate and fund a product contrary to their own moral teaching and purport to define which religious institutions are “religious enough” to merit protection of their religious liberty. These features of the “preventive services” mandate amount to an unjust law. As Archbishop William Lori of Baltimore, Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee for Religious Liberty, testified to Congress: “This is not a matter of whether contraception may be *prohibited* by the government. This is not even a matter of whether contraception may be *supported* by the government. Instead, it is a matter of whether religious people and institutions may be *forced* by the government to provide coverage for contraception or sterilization, even if that violates their religious beliefs.”¹⁷
- State immigration laws* prevent Catholic parishes from attending to the spiritual needs and requests for sacraments for illegal immigrants and their children.
- Christian students’ group on campus* is forbidden from excluding from membership students who reject the Christian moral code.
- Discrimination against small church congregations* prevents them from renting public schools for weekend worship services.

¹⁷ Most Rev. William E. Lori, Chairman, USCCB Ad Hoc Committee on Religious Liberty, Oral Testimony Before the Judiciary Committee of the United States House of Representatives, February 28, 2012.

- E. *Discrimination against Catholic humanitarian services* assisting victims of human trafficking who now must offer or refer victimized women for contraceptive and abortion services.

Teacher may propose other cases:

Is each person acting in accord with his or her right to religious liberty?

- 1) Muslim cabdrivers are refusing to carry alcohol in their vehicles. *Answer—they are free to refuse, losing revenue for practicing their faith.*
- 2) Turban-wearing Sikhs have been fighting extra screening at airports. *Answer—reasonable security measures protect the rights of all citizens in a “just public order”. The annoyance is part of their right to wear religious garb.*
- 3) The owner of Chick-Fil-A says that he supports “the biblical definition of the family unit; he does not refuse to serve same-sex couples food. *Answer—he is free, under the First Amendment, to state his religious belief, possibly losing revenue.*

Freedom of conscience: a helpful example is *reductio ad extremis*: majority opinion is fallible and government very easily can overstep its bounds, as in 1930s Germany. Only the voice of conscience kept right-thinking Germans on track.

If the teacher has reason to believe that students comprehend the information presented above and would prefer not to reinforce those points again, emphasis may be placed on civil obedience that participates in the democratic process through direct communication with legislators. This application emphasizes how believers can voice their concerns on the state and national levels.

State and federal legislators have staff members who read and listen to the concerns of constituents concerning possible and proposed legislation. Legislators are briefed by these staffers so that they hear and understand the positions of their electorate. All legislators have websites similar to Senator Corker’s website: <http://www.corker.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/emailme>.

Students may be assigned to write a letter, compose an e-mail, or outline a phone call that would explain the students’ positions concerning the importance of religious liberty as it relates to a current debated issue to be decided in a state legislature or in Congress.

Conclusion and Celebration of our religious liberty--(5 minutes)

In the Ecclesial Method, the class ends with a restatement of the proclamation and reflections that students can take away with them as they live their faith.

Say: Let us pray for that full measure of freedom which the Church needs to care for the salvation of souls. Let us end with the Prayer for the Protection of Religious Liberty. This is the same prayer prayed at the end of Lesson A. (Feel free to pray with your students in other ways that will also encourage them to take to heart and converse with God concerning what they have learned about religious liberty.) The prayer card is in the additional resources of the unit plan’s appendix.

Appendix

Prayers

From the Statement on Religious Liberty, “Our First, Most Cherished Liberty”:

Almighty God, Father of all nations,
For freedom you have set us free in Christ Jesus (Gal 5:1).
We praise and bless you for the gift of religious liberty,
the foundation of human rights, justice, and the common good.
Grant to our leaders the wisdom to protect and promote our liberties;
By your grace may we have the courage to defend them, for ourselves and for all those who live in
this blessed land.
We ask this through the intercession of Mary Immaculate, our patroness,
and in the name of your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
with whom you live and reign, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

For the Protection of Religious Liberty

O God our Creator,
from your provident hand
we have received our right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.
You have called us as your people
and given us the right and the duty to worship you,
the only true God, and your Son, Jesus Christ.
Through the power and working of your Holy Spirit,
you call us to live out our faith in the midst of the world,
bringing the light and the saving truth of the Gospel
to every corner of society.
We ask you to bless us
in our vigilance for the gift of religious liberty.
Give us the strength of mind and heart
to readily defend our freedoms when they are threatened;
give us courage in making our voices heard
on behalf of the rights of your Church
and the freedom of conscience of all people of faith.
Grant, we pray, O heavenly Father,
a clear and united voice to all your sons and daughters
gathered in your Church
in this decisive hour in the history of our nation,
so that, with every trial withstood
and every danger overcome—
for the sake of our children, our grandchildren,
and all who come after us—
this great land will always be “one nation, under God,
indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.”
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lesson A—Religious Liberty according to Reason

Entrance Slip for First Class

*In your own words, define religious
liberty:*

*Give one example of someone you
know or someone you have read or
heard about who has had his/her
religious liberty violated:*

1. All other freedoms are fragile. Why?

- **1886** Society is essential to the fulfillment of the human vocation. To attain this aim, respect must be accorded to the just hierarchy of values, which “subordinates physical and instinctual dimensions to interior and spiritual ones.”⁸

Human society must primarily be considered something pertaining to the spiritual. Through it, in the bright light of truth, men should share their knowledge, be able to exercise their rights and fulfill their obligations, be inspired to seek spiritual values; mutually derive genuine pleasure from the beautiful, of whatever order it be; always be readily disposed to pass on to others the best of their own cultural heritage; and eagerly strive to make their own the spiritual achievements of others. These benefits not only influence, but at the same time give aim and scope to all that has bearing on cultural expressions, economic, and social institutions, political movements and forms, laws, and all other structures by which society is outwardly established and constantly developed.⁹
- **1887** The inversion of means and ends,¹⁰ which results in giving the value of ultimate end to what is only a means for attaining it, or in viewing persons as mere means to that end, engenders unjust structures which “make Christian conduct in keeping with the commandments of the divine Law-giver difficult and almost impossible.”¹¹
- **1878** All men are called to the same end: God himself. There is a certain resemblance between the unity of the divine persons and the fraternity that men are to establish among themselves in truth and love.¹ Love of neighbor is inseparable from love for God.
- **1879** The human person needs to live in society. Society is not for him an extraneous addition but a requirement of his nature. Through the exchange with others, mutual service and dialogue with his brethren, man develops his potential; he thus responds to his vocation.²
- **1883** Socialization also presents dangers. Excessive intervention by the state can threaten personal freedom and initiative. The teaching of the Church has elaborated the principle of *subsidiarity*, according to which “a community of a higher order should not interfere in the internal life of a community of a lower order, depriving the latter of its functions, but rather should support it in case of need and help to co-ordinate its activity with the activities of the rest of society, always with a view to the common good.”⁷
- **1885** The principle of subsidiarity is opposed to all forms of collectivism. It sets limits for state intervention. It aims at harmonizing the relationships between individuals and societies. It tends toward the establishment of true international order.

2. What is true freedom?

- CCC 1730-1734
- **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.”²⁶ (30)

Man is rational and therefore like God; he is created with free will and is master over his acts.²⁷

3. 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. (1721)
- **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. (396, 1849, 2006)
- **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."²⁸ (1803)
- **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. (1036, 1804)

4. Religious liberty is a foundational freedom. Explain.

CCC 1898-1899, 1902, 1907, 1929-1930

- **1898** Every human community needs an authority to govern it.¹⁶ The foundation of such authority lies in human nature. It is necessary for the unity of the state. Its role is to ensure as far as possible the common good of the society.
- **1899** The authority required by the moral order derives from God: "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore he who resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment."¹⁷
- **1902** Authority does not derive its moral legitimacy from itself. It must not behave in a despotic manner, but must act for the common good as a "moral force based on freedom and a sense of responsibility":²¹
- A human law has the character of law to the extent that it accords with right reason, and thus derives from the eternal law. Insofar as it falls short of right reason it is said to be an unjust law, and thus has not so much the nature of law as of a kind of violence.²²
- **1907** First, the common good presupposes *respect for the person* as such. In the name of the common good, public authorities are bound to respect the fundamental and inalienable rights of the human person. Society should permit each of its members to fulfill his vocation. In particular, the common good resides in the conditions for the exercise of the natural freedoms indispensable for the development of the human vocation, such as "the right to act according to a sound norm of conscience and to safeguard... privacy, and rightful freedom also in matters of religion."²⁷
- **1929** Social justice can be obtained only in respecting the transcendent dignity of man. The person represents the ultimate end of society, which is ordered to him:
- What is at stake is the dignity of the human person, whose defense and promotion have been entrusted to us by the Creator, and to whom the men and women at every moment of history are strictly and responsibly in debt.³⁵

- **1930** Respect for the human person entails respect for the rights that flow from his dignity as a creature. These rights are prior to society and must be recognized by it. They are the basis of the moral legitimacy of every authority: by flouting them, or refusing to recognize them in its positive legislation, a society undermines its own moral legitimacy.³⁶ If it does not respect them, authority can rely only on force or violence to obtain obedience from its subjects. It is the Church’s role to remind men of good will of these rights and to distinguish them from unwarranted or false claims.

5. But religious liberty can never be sufficient for human happiness. Why not?

CCC 1739-1742; 1718

- **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. (387, 401)
- **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.”³³ 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. (2108, 1887)
- **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.”³⁴ In him we have communion with the “truth that makes us free.”³⁵ The Holy Spirit has been given to us and, as the Apostle teaches, “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.”³⁶ Already we glory in the “liberty of the children of God.”³⁷ (782)
- **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: (2002, 1784)

Note: For a fully searchable e-text of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, see:

<http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catechism/catechism-of-the-catholic-church/epub/index.cfm>

Lesson C—Scripture and Questions the Passages Answer

<i>Who is the source of religious freedom?</i>	For freedom you have set us free in Christ Jesus (Gal 5:1).
<i>Who profits from the gift of religious freedom?</i>	Creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God (Romans 8:21)
<i>When God and government conflict, whom must the believer obey?</i>	But Peter and John replied, "Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God." (Acts 4:19)
<i>What mission does Jesus give to the Church through the apostles?</i>	19 "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:19-20).
<i>Why does the Church act publicly? What is the reward for those who cared for the needy?</i>	"Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.' (Matthew 25:34-36)
<i>How can a believer know whom to obey?</i>	Render to Caesar the things that belong to Caesar, but render to God the things that belong to God. (Mark 12:17)

Lesson C—The Church Claims two kinds of freedom

<u>Social</u>	<u>Personal</u>
<u>Hierarchical society</u>	<u>Composed of individual persons</u>

Lesson C Activity

Activity: See an online video clip of the movie *God's Not Dead*.¹⁸

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dc5s1ZKNmcc>

This movie reflects Protestant Christian theology and perspective on the culture of the United States. Adolescents will find its moral challenge captivating and Catholic students will be able to compare their present experiences and concerns about the future after watching the movie trailer and the college freshman's defense of his faith in God.

¹⁸ Teachers should ask for and receive a license to show copyrighted movies and/or television programs.



In June 2014, Pope Francis remarked that religious persecution is more widespread today than 1,700 years ago. He emphasized that it is incomprehensible and alarming that people continue to suffer discrimination, restriction of their rights and even persecution for publicly professing their faith. Undeniably, “Serious violations inflicted on this basic right [religious freedom] are causes of serious concern,” and all people must work to defend “the intangible dignity of the human person against every attack.” Yet, religious liberty continues to be under threat:

- *HHS mandate for sterilization, contraception, and abortion-inducing drugs.* The mandate of the Department of Health and Human Services forces religious institutions to facilitate and/or fund a product contrary to their own moral teaching. Further, the federal government tries to define which religious institutions are “religious enough” to merit protection of their religious liberty.
- *Catholic foster care and adoption services.* Boston, San Francisco, the District of Columbia, and the State of Illinois have driven local Catholic Charities out of the business of providing adoption or foster care services—by revoking their licenses, by ending their government contracts, or both—because those Charities refused to place children with same-sex couples or unmarried opposite-sex couples who cohabit.
- *State immigration laws.* Several states have passed laws that forbid what they deem as “harboring” of undocumented immigrants—and what the Church deems Christian charity and pastoral care to these immigrants.
- *Discrimination against small church congregations.* New York City adopted a policy that barred the Bronx Household of Faith and other churches from renting public schools on weekends for worship services, even though non-religious groups could rent the same schools for many other uses. Litigation in this case continues.
- *Discrimination against Catholic humanitarian services.* After years of excellent performance by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Migration and Refugee Services (MRS) in administering contract services for victims of human trafficking, the federal government changed its contract specifications to require MRS to provide or refer for contraceptive and abortion services in violation of Catholic teaching.
- *Christian students on campus.* In its over-100-year history, the University of California Hastings College of Law has denied student organization status to only one group, the Christian Legal Society, because it required its leaders to be Christian and to abstain from sexual activity outside of marriage.

In his Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis clearly outlined the importance of a preserving a robust sense of religious freedom. He argued that a “healthy pluralism...does not entail privatizing religions in an attempt to reduce them to the quiet obscurity of the individual's conscience or to relegate them to the enclosed precincts of churches, synagogues or mosques.” Therefore, it is essential that a proper sense of religious pluralism be fostered and defended not just in the United States, but throughout the world.

What can you do to ensure the protection of religious freedom at home and abroad? Text the word “Freedom” to 377377 for updates from the bishops on current threats to religious liberty. Also, please visit www.usccb.org/freedom for more information on how you can take action to protect religious liberty!

Lesson E Handout

Summary of *Dignitatis Humanae*

Core principles for governments to consider when formalizing religious freedom into law

In *Dignitatis Humanae*, Pope Paul VI explained that the foundation of the principle of religious freedom is rooted in the dignity of the human person, who is endowed with reason and free will, and therefore able to take responsibility for his or her actions. Religious freedom is identifiable both through reason and divine revelation; it exists to allow human persons to fulfill their obligation to seek God and must be a civil or constitutional right. The document explains that freedom to practice religion is not relativism – there is one way to salvation, through Jesus Christ.

Pope Paul VI recommended the following core principles for governments to consider when formalizing religious freedom into law:

- Do not require what conscience forbids, or forbid what conscience requires
- Religious freedom should be exercised individually and communally, in private and public
- Parents have the right and responsibility to direct the religious upbringing of their children
- Internal affairs of religious organizations are recognized as such, including in the:
 - Selection and training of ministers
 - Ability to own buildings, money and other property
 - Right to teach and witness
- No discrimination based on religion – even if there is an established state religion
- Government should acknowledge religion and show it favor, but should not command or inhibit religious acts
- Right to express religion in the public square

Likewise, religions must acknowledge their limits within a free society:

- Avoid coercion in evangelization
- Exercise with civility and responsibility
- Do not abuse legitimate religious freedom
- Acknowledge “due limits” for a “just public order”

This summary is from the introduction to the section Foundational Documents on Religious Liberty

<http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/religious-liberty/foundational-documents-on-religious-liberty.cfm> \m

Lesson E Handout – Further Reference to the American tradition of being willing to suffer a consequence rather than submit to a law one considers opposed to one’s conscience.

Excerpts from *Civil Disobedience* By Henry David Thoreau, 1849

...How does it become a man to behave toward this American government today? I answer, that he cannot without disgrace be associated with it. I cannot for an instant recognize that political organization as my government which is the slave's government also.

All men recognize the right of revolution; that is, the right to refuse allegiance to, and to resist, the government, when its tyranny or its inefficiency are great and unendurable. But almost all say that such is not the case now. But such was the case, they think, in the Revolution Of '75. If one were to tell me that this was a bad government because it taxed certain foreign commodities brought to its ports, it is most probable that I should not make an ado about it, for I can do without them. All machines have their friction; and possibly this does enough good to counterbalance the evil. At any rate, it is a great evil to make a stir about it. But when the friction comes to have its machine, and oppression and robbery are organized, I say, let us not have such a machine any longer. In other words, when a sixth of the population of a nation which has undertaken to be the refuge of liberty are slaves, and a whole country is unjustly overrun and conquered by a foreign army, and subjected to military law, I think that it is not too soon for honest men to rebel and revolutionize. What makes this duty the more urgent is the fact that the country so overrun is not our own, but ours is the invading army.

...Unjust laws exist: shall we be content to obey them, or shall we endeavor to amend them, and obey them until we have succeeded, or shall we transgress them at once? Men generally, under such a government as this, think that they ought to wait until they have persuaded the majority to alter them. They think that, if they should resist, the remedy would be worse than the evil. But it is the fault of the government itself that the remedy is worse than the evil. It makes it worse. Why is it not more apt to anticipate and provide for reform? Why does it not cherish its wise minority? Why does it cry and resist before it is hurt? Why does it not encourage its citizens to be on the alert to point out its faults, and do better than it would have them? Why does it always crucify Christ, and excommunicate Copernicus and Luther, and pronounce Washington and Franklin rebels?

...Under a government which imprisons any unjustly, the true place for a just man is also a prison. The proper place today, the only place which Massachusetts has provided for her freer and less desponding spirits, is in her prisons, to be put out and locked out of the State by her own act, as they have already put themselves out by their principles. It is there that the fugitive slave, and the Mexican prisoner on parole, and the Indian come to plead the wrongs of his race should find them; on that separate, but more free and honorable, ground, where the State places those who are not with her, but against her- the only house in a slave State in which a free man can abide with honor. If any think that their influence would be lost there, and their voices no longer afflict the ear of the State, that they would not be as an enemy within its walls, they do not know by how much truth is stronger than error, nor how much more eloquently and effectively he can combat injustice who has experienced a little in his own person. Cast your whole vote, not a strip of paper merely, but your whole influence. A minority is powerless while it conforms to the majority; it is not even a minority then; but it is irresistible when it clogs by its whole weight. If the alternative is to keep all just men in prison, or give up war and slavery, the State will not hesitate which to choose. If a thousand men were not to pay their tax-bills this year, that would not be a violent and bloody measure, as it would be to pay them, and enable the State to commit violence and shed innocent blood. This is, in fact, the definition of a peaceable revolution, if any such is possible. If the tax-gatherer, or any other public officer, asks me, as one has done, "But what shall I do?" my answer is, "If you really wish to do anything, resign your office." When the subject has refused allegiance, and the officer has resigned his office, then the revolution is accomplished. But even suppose blood should flow. Is there not a sort of blood shed when the conscience is wounded? Through this wound a man's real manhood and immortality flow out, and he bleeds to an everlasting death. I see this blood flowing now.

IV. Additional Resources

Additional Resources

- **2014 Fortnight for Freedom Closing Mass Homily by Archbishop Kurtz**
<http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/religious-liberty/fortnight-for-freedom/upload/fortnight-2014-abp-kurtz-closing-homily.pdf>
- **Our First, Most Cherished Liberty** - Special Event - 2014-07-04 - Closing Mass for the Fortnight for Freedom - Archbishop Kurtz
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j4zsj87kewq>
- **A Statement on Religious Liberty**, *United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Ad Hoc Committee for Religious Liberty*
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5DSCtbTRK1U>
- **Reflections for the June 21 to July 4, 2014 Fortnight of Freedom** *Reflections for each of the Days of the Fortnight of Freedom, applying the principles of Dignitatis Humanae to the current situation in the United States.*
<http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/religious-liberty/fortnight-for-freedom/upload/fortnight-reflections-pref-statement.pdf>
- **Examples of manipulation of the principles behind religious liberty:**
<http://www.nationalreview.com/corner/289970/vanderbilt-universitys-assault-religious-liberty-david-french>
<http://www.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052702304070304577395954161137584?mg=reno64-wsj&url=http%3A%2F%2Fonline.wsj.com%2Farticle%2FSB10001424052702304070304577395954161137584.html>