Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

I testify today in the name of the U.S. Catholic Conference (USCC), the policy agency of the Catholic bishops of the United States. On behalf of the USCC I wish to express our appreciation for the opportunity to present our views on religious freedom as a human right. In his address on human rights at the United Nations (1979) Pope John Paul II said:

> Respect for the dignity of the human person would seem to demand that, when the exact tenor of the exercise of religious freedom is being discussed or determined with a view to national laws or international conventions, the institutions that are by their nature at the service of religion should also be brought in. If this participation is omitted, there is a danger of imposing, in so intimate a field of man's life, rules or restrictions that are opposed to his true religious needs.

The USCC believes that discussions at the national level about religious freedom should include the institutions which represent the religious bodies of our nation and we commend the idea of these hearings.

This testimony will address three points: first, the relationship of religious freedom to other human rights; second, the content of the right of religious freedom; third, the relevance of the right of religious freedom in international politics today.

I. Religious Freedom as a Human Right

In Roman Catholic thought religious freedom is regarded as both a unique human right and as closely connected with a spectrum of other rights which protect the dignity of the human person.

Religious freedom is unique because of its object; all other

human rights, whether political-civil rights or socio-economic rights, have as their object the ordering of human relationships in society. Religious freedom has as its object a person's relationship with God, or to put it another way, the person's quest for religious truth. Precisely because the right recognizes that the human person is called to a relationship beyond the human setting, religious freedom plays a unique role in protecting the person from the claims of state power. To affirm the right of religious liberty for a person is to deny any state the right to claim absolute control of a person's life, the person has a destiny beyond the state, a call to a transcendent relationship which the state is not capable of assessing. The state must provide a zone of freedom within which the person's right to religious liberty can be exercised.

It is precisely when one examines the meaning of the zone of freedom which religious freedom requires that its relationship to other human rights becomes clear. To exercise the right of religious liberty the person must also be guaranteed the right of freedom of conscience, freedom of speech and freedom of association. These other rights are distinct from religious liberty, each has its own basis, content and meaning; but each of them is connected to the right of religious liberty. The relationship between religious freedom and other human rights is a reciprocal one; the demand for religious freedom, understood in its full meaning, leads to a demand for recognition of other rights; these other rights in turn protect and provide the means of exercising the right of religious liberty. The consequence of this reciprocal relationship is that

if a state denies the right to religious freedom, it almost certainly will deny other rights as well. If it acknowledges the right to religious freedom, it will be forced to respect other rights also.

Two conclusions follow from this analysis of religious freedom and other human rights. First, our understanding of the meaning of religious freedom should not be isolated from our definition and understanding of other basic human rights; religious liberty is part of the spectrum of fundamental rights which are rooted in and designed to protect the dignity of the human person. This interdependent view of human rights is the way contemporary Catholic theology (as expressed in John XXIII's encyclical Peace On Earth (1963), Vatican II's Declaration on Religious Liberty (1965) and John Paul II's Address at the United Nations (1979) defines the meaning of religious freedom.

Second, religious freedom can have powerful political consequences, especially in situations where a totalitarian or authoritarian state seeks to suppress the rights of the person. Precisely because of its commitment to religious freedom in conjunction with other human rights the Catholic church today finds itself in confrontation with governments of the right and left, from Latin America to Eastern Europe. One cannot understand the church's role in these situations unless one has a clear sense of the full meaning of the right of religious liberty. I will now outline the contents of the right and then look at its relevance to selected cases.

II. The Content of Religious Freedom

The clearest exposition of the right of religious freedom from a Roman Catholic perspective is found in the Second Vatican Council's Declaration on Religious Liberty. The teaching of the Council is based on the principle that the right of religious liberty has both a personal and social dimension. The personal dimension is usually classified as "freedom of conscience"; the social dimension is "the free exercise of religion". A summary of these two concepts follows:

Freedom of conscience: is the right of each person to be immune from all external coercion in his or her search for God, religious truth and faith. The right is radically personal, but not individualistic; the search for religious truth and the expression of faith calls for a community of faith. Hence freedom of conscience is directly tied to the free exercise of religion.

Free exercise of religion: is the social dimension of the right to religious liberty; the right of free exercise includes three subordinate rights:

1) Ecclesial freedom: the corporate right of religious organizations to internal autonomy. This immunity from legal or political coercion governs issues ranging from the freedom to establish doctrine, through the right to establish schools to the right to communicate with ecclesial communities in other lands. The right to ecclesial freedom is the social counterpart to freedom of conscience and the precise category at stake in many church-state conflicts in the world today.

2) Freedom of religious association: this affirms the right of a person to enter or leave a religious association and the right of persons to form religious associations for charitable purposes.

3) Freedom of religious expression: the right affirms that religious organizations are to be free from coercion in fulfilling activities ranging from worship through public declarations regarding socio-political questions with religious or moral implications.

III. Religious Freedom and International Relations

This committee's concern is with the relevance of religious freedom as an internationally recognized human right. I will speak to that concern by using three illustrations in which the right to religious freedom is directly tied to the Catholic church's role in specific situations. My purpose is not to examine cases in detail, but to illustrate how religious freedom is both the basis of the church's action and the way the church relates to other questions of human rights. The three examples I have chosen are Poland, Latin America and Lebanon.

Poland: The Catholic church's pivotal role in the Polish crisis is included in every analysis made of the Polish situation. Without entering a detailed examination of the political forces at work in Poland, this testimony focuses on the way in which religious liberty establishes the basis for the church's action in the public arena. The church in Poland is clearly a religious force, acting as a teacher and mediator in a conflicted situation. Its right to speak is rooted in the social meaning of religious

freedom - the free exercise of religion. The church uses this right to be a voice raised in defense of the human person.

The church's defense of the person moves it to address those restrictions or suppression of rights which are essential for human dignity. It is in this context that the church has opposed the imposition of martial law and specifically has supported the right of laborers to organize in free trade unions. The Polish case illustrates the interdependence of rights; because of the church's social conception of religious freedom, it joins the defense and exercise of this right to the protection of other human rights. Today in Poland the institution of the church and the institution of a labor movement stand together in the name of freedom against the power of the state.

Latin America: In Poland the church is confronted by a government of the left; in Latin America it confronts governments of the right. The political and ideological coloration of the regimes vary drastically but the dynamic of the church-state conflict is remarkably similar. In each case the church refuses to allow an authoritarian regime the right to subordinate the human person to its purposes. In Poland the church opposes the government because it suppresses the rights of workers. In Brazil the church stands with workers in their struggle to form unions under a labor law which resembles fascist corporatism.

The examples of the church in Brazil in the 1960s and Chile in the 1970s provide illustrations of the linkage of religious freedom and the protection and promotion of human rights. In both

cases the church found itself as the sole institution capable of withstanding the power of the state; as political parties were suspended, the press restricted, unions suppressed and universities interdicted the church remained as the mediating structure between the citizen and the state. As the church addressed violation of rights - as it assumed the task of being the voice of the voiceless - it found itself under attack. In these cases the right of religious freedom - especially in its social manifestations - became a point of conflict precisely because the church had addressed other human rights violations.

Lebanon: The tragedy of Lebanon over the last seven years highlights a different but equally important dimension of religious liberty. The Lebanese conflict is often and too glibly described as a "religious conflict". The reality is more complex. The Lebanese civil war has internal roots and the religious factor is one of them, but no interpretation of the Lebanese reality is valid unless it recognizes how the regional and international forces at work throughout the Middle East have been projected into Lebanon.

The element of religious liberty, however, is one of the factors at work in Lebanon. Lebanon has been a unique meeting ground of cultures and religion. East meets West in Lebanon, and one reflection of that meeting has been the relationship of Christianity and Islam. Precisely at the time when these two great religious traditions desperately need to be in dialogue in the Middle East, Lebanon, the most fertile ground for fruitful dialogue, has been torn to shreds.

The Christians of Lebanon have a legitimate and pervasive concern that the future of Lebanon provide for a public Christian presence in the life of the society. The crucial role Lebanon has played in the Middle East and can play again makes this specific objective a concern for the international community also. The way the right of religious freedom is preserved and protected in Lebanon will have much to do with the future prospects for peace in Lebanon and in the Middle East.

These three illustrations of the significance of religious liberty in different regions of the world raise a final point about U.S. foreign policy. Understanding how the right to religious liberty takes shape in distinct situations and how the church relates to them can be a source of guidance for the analysis of U.S. policy. Particularly in the Latin American case the USCC has felt that the church in Latin America has been highlighting elements of the Latin American scene which U.S. policy either ignores or fails to understand. We do so at our peril; not only in Latin America but in other cases.