

Day 10 ★ June 30, 2017

Reflections for the FORTNIGHT FOR FREEDOM

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

Finally, government is to see to it that the equality of citizens before the law, which is itself an element of the common welfare, is never violated for religious reasons whether openly or covertly. Nor is there to be discrimination among citizens.

It follows that a wrong is done when government imposes upon its people, by force or fear or other means, the profession or repudiation of any religion, or when it hinders men from joining or leaving a religious body. All the more is it a violation of the will of God and of the sacred rights of the person and the family of nations, when force is brought to bear in any way in order to destroy or repress religion, either in the whole of mankind or in a particular country or in a specific community.

*Declaration on Religious Liberty
(Dignitatis Humanae), no. 6
December 7, 1965*

Reflection for Day Ten

Because all human beings possess equal dignity, value, and worth, the government is to ensure that this equality is maintained both for the good of the individual and for the good of society as a whole. This equality specifically should not be violated on religious grounds. Each religious body and the members of that body have equal rights to religious liberty. This equality demands that there be no discrimination based upon one's religious beliefs.

The Council Fathers now stress that, based upon this equality among its citizens, no government is permitted to impose in any way "the profession or repudiation of any religion." Such an imposition is a violation of the right to be true to one's conscience.

Because of the freedom of conscience, the government is also not permitted to deny a person the right to join or leave a religious body. The government has no right to stipulate what a person can or cannot believe.

If the above is true, then the Council states that it is all the more wrong when "force is brought to bear in any way in order to destroy or repress religion." This not only applies to governments but also to religious bodies themselves. No religious body is permitted to harass or seek to eliminate another religious group.

Within our contemporary world, where is religious equality denied or religious discrimination tolerated? Are there instances where one religion violates the rights of other religions?



Fortnight
for Freedom

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Freedom for Mission
June 21 – July 4

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