

Day 8 ★ June 28, 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.

Since the family is a society in its own original right, it has the right freely to live its own domestic religious life under the guidance of parents. Parents, moreover, have the right to determine, in accordance with their own religious beliefs, the kind of religious education that their children are to receive.

Government, in consequence, must acknowledge the right of parents to make a genuinely free choice of schools and of other means of education. The use of this freedom of choice is not to be made a reason for imposing unjust burdens on parents, whether directly or indirectly. Besides, the rights of parents are violated if their children are forced to attend lessons or instructions which are not in agreement with their religious beliefs. The same is true if a single system of education, from which all religious formation is excluded, is imposed upon all.

*Declaration on Religious Liberty
(Dignitatis Humanae), no. 5
December 7, 1965*

Reflection for Day Eight

The Council Fathers now address the religious freedom that is enjoyed by the family. Families have the right to live out their faith within the family. Moreover, parents have a natural right to religiously guide their families. They are the ones who have primary responsibility for the care and education of their children, and this is especially true of the religious education of their children. Thus, while parents are primarily responsible for the religious education, they are also free to choose the kind of religious education their children receive.

From within the Catholic tradition, Vatican II stated that the family is a “domestic church,” that is, it is within the family that children are first taught the

Gospel, are taught to pray and to keep the Commandments. Together the members of a family live out the Gospel life of love. In keeping with this, the Council states that parents must be free to choose their children’s schooling. The exercise of this freedom should not be the cause of undue financial burdens upon the family. Likewise, children should not be forced to attend instruction that is contrary to the religious belief of their families. Lastly, if there is only one form of education within a country, this does not mean that all religious instruction should be forbidden. Accommodation is to be made. What we see here is the Church ardently wanting to assure a broad and extensive scope for families to live out their faith as families, and this extends to the education of children.

Why is the above important for parents and their families? Are the above aspects of domestic religious freedom jeopardized today?



**Fortnight
for Freedom**

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**Freedom for Mission
June 21 – July 4**

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