

# Freedom in the Teachings of St Josemaría: Conditions for Growing in Freedom

'It is not enough to know theoretically that one is free; it is a reality that needs to be experienced and savoured.' *Conversations*, 53.

‘One can be a prisoner in the most inhumane and degrading cell and be free, accepting the will of God and loving the sacrifice, thinking of all souls. How many martyrs for the faith have flown like eagles, with their body in irons and their soul free to love God without limits.’

(St Josemaría , 1972)

But neither should we sit back and allow freedom to be eroded.



# Homily: Christian Respect for Persons and Their Freedom

Emphasises the first consequence of divine filiation. A truth that requires respect for freedom, within the limits of the human condition.

- a. Respect for the freedom of individuals as required by their dignity.
- b. Respect for the freedom of others on opinionable matters.
- c. Respect for freedom on matters that are not the competency of civil authority (although in themselves they are not opinionable).



# Respect for Freedom in Response to Human Dignity: Freedom of Consciences

The right of every person not to be obliged to act against his or her conscience (by physical or moral coercion). Also the right to respect consciences.

*I have always defended the freedom of individual consciences. I do not understand violence. I do not consider it a proper way either to persuade or to win over. Error is overcome by prayer, by God's grace, and by study; never by force, always with charity. (Conversations, n. 14).*

*Only if he defends the individual freedom of others, with the personal responsibility that must go with it, only then can he defend his own with human and Christian integrity. (Christ is Passing By, n. 184)*

# Respect for the freedom of others on opinionable matters

*The personal freedom of the Catholic layman in opinionable matters has no limits other than the law of God and fidelity to the Holy Church; these are not limits, but precious gifts, which make of human actions acts of precious content, worthy of a child of God. (Letter, 1961)*

*When the value of freedom is fully understood and the divine gift of freedom is passionately loved, the pluralism that freedom brings with it is also loved. (Conversations, n. 98)*

*We do not all think the same way because we admit the greatest possible pluralism in all temporal matters and in debatable theological questions. (Conversations, n. 30)*

*This doctrine of civic freedom, of understanding, of living together in harmony, forms a very important part of the message of Opus Dei. (Conversations, n. 118)*



# Unity & Diversity

*A true Christian never thinks that unity in the Faith, fidelity to the teaching authority and tradition of the Church, and concern for the spreading of the saving message of Christ, run counter to the existence of variety in the attitudes of people as regards the things which God has left, as the phrase goes, to the free discussion of men. In fact, he is fully aware that this variety forms part of God's plan. It is something desired by God, who distributes His gifts and His lights as He wishes.*

*The Christian should love other people and therefore respect opinions contrary to his own, and live in harmony and full brotherhood with people who do not think as he does. (Conversations, n. 67)*

*Spiritual unity is compatible with variety in temporal matters when extremism and intolerance are shunned. (Conversations, n. 67)*



# Freedom & the Vocation of the Laity

Your task as a Christian citizen is to help see Christ's love and freedom preside over all aspects of modern life: culture and the economy, work and rest, family life and social relations. (*Furrow*, n. 302)

A man or a society that does not react to suffering and injustice and makes no effort to alleviate them is still distant from the love of Christ's heart. While Christians enjoy the fullest freedom in finding and applying various solutions to these problems, they should be united in having one and the same desire to serve mankind. Otherwise their Christianity will not be the word and life of Jesus; it will be a fraud, a deception of God and man. (*Christ is Passing By*, n. 167)



# A Sea Without Shores

The laity, by their very vocation, seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and by ordering them according to the plan of God.

They live in the world ... in all of the secular professions and occupations. They live in the ordinary circumstances of family and social life, from which the very web of their existence is woven. They are called there by God that by exercising their proper function and led by the spirit of the Gospel they may work for the sanctification of the world from within as a leaven. In this way they may make Christ known to others, especially by the testimony of a life resplendent in faith, hope and charity.

*Lumen Gentium, n. 31*

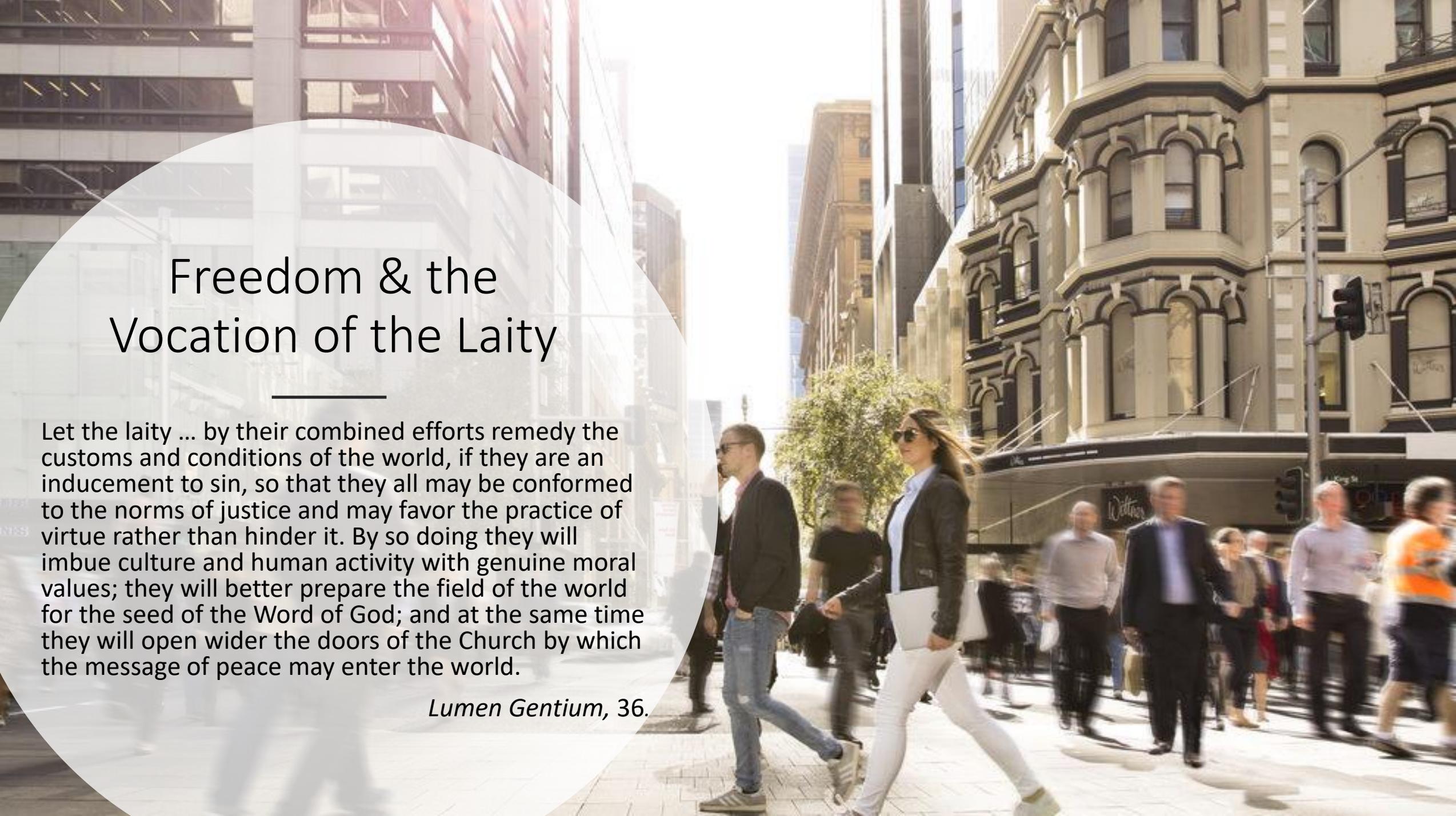


# Restoring the World

The faithful ... must learn the deepest meaning and the value of all creation, as well as its role in the harmonious praise of God. They must assist each other to live holier lives even in their daily occupations. In this way the world may be permeated by the spirit of Christ and it may more effectively fulfill its purpose in justice, charity and peace.

The laity have the principal role in the overall fulfillment of this duty. Therefore, by their competence in secular training and by their activity, elevated from within by the grace of Christ, let them vigorously contribute their effort, so that created goods may be perfected by human labor, technical skill and civic culture for the benefit of all men according to the design of the Creator and the light of His Word. May the goods of this world be more equitably distributed among all men, and may they in their own way be conducive to universal progress in human and Christian freedom. In this manner, through the members of the Church, will Christ progressively illumine the whole of human society with His saving light.



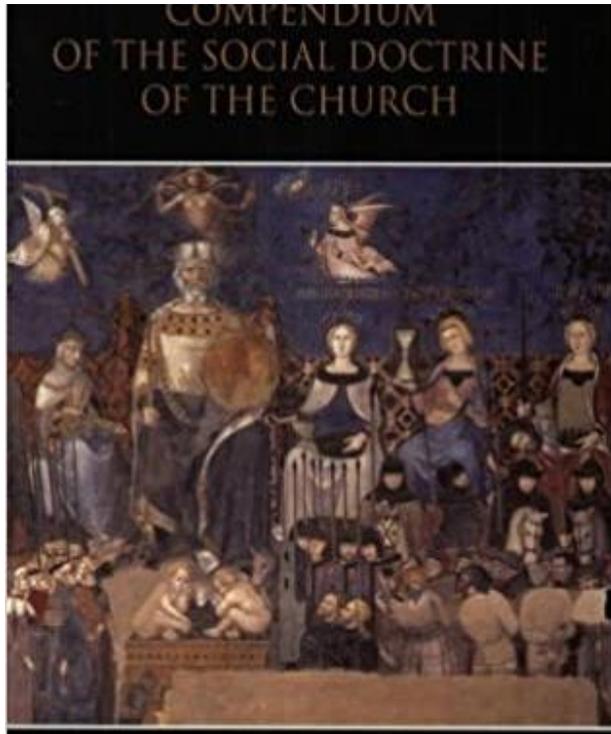


# Freedom & the Vocation of the Laity

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Let the laity ... by their combined efforts remedy the customs and conditions of the world, if they are an inducement to sin, so that they all may be conformed to the norms of justice and may favor the practice of virtue rather than hinder it. By so doing they will imbue culture and human activity with genuine moral values; they will better prepare the field of the world for the seed of the Word of God; and at the same time they will open wider the doors of the Church by which the message of peace may enter the world.

*Lumen Gentium, 36.*



# Social Doctrine of the Church

# Religious Freedom

The faithful should learn how to distinguish carefully between those rights and duties which are theirs as members of the Church, and those which they have as members of human society. Let them strive to reconcile the two, remembering that *in every temporal affair they must be guided by a Christian conscience, since even in secular business there is no human activity which can be withdrawn from God's dominion.*

In our own time, however, it is most urgent that this distinction and also this harmony should shine forth more clearly than ever in the lives of the faithful, so that the mission of the Church may correspond more fully to the special conditions of the world today. For it must be admitted that the temporal sphere is governed by its own principles, since it is rightly concerned with the interests of this world. But *that ominous doctrine which attempts to build a society with no regard whatever for religion, and which attacks and destroys the religious liberty of its citizens, is rightly to be rejected.* (Lumen Gentium, n. 36)



# 'Holy Intransigence'

By the grace of God, who brought us to be born to his Church by baptism, we know that there is but a true religion, and on that point we do not yield, we are uncompromising: holy and uncompromising. Will there be anyone with common sense – I often tell you – who will give in to something as simple as the sum of two plus two? Can you concede two and two to be three and a half? The compromise – in the doctrine of faith – is a sure sign of not having the truth, or of not knowing that it is possessed. (*Letter*, 1933)

When we Catholics defend and uphold the truth, without making concessions, we have to strive to create an atmosphere of charity, of harmony, to drown all hatred and resentment. (*Forge*, n. 564)



# 'Holy Coercion' (Lk 14:3)

If we meditate on the Gospel and reflect on the teachings of Jesus, we will not mistake these commands for coercion. See how gently Christ invites: 'If you have a mind to be perfect... If any man would come after me...' His *compelle intrare* implies no violence, either physical or moral. Rather, it reflects the power of attraction of Christian example, which shows in its way of acting the power of God: 'See how the Father attracts. He delights in teaching, and not in imposing necessity on men. That is how he attracts men towards himself. (*Christ is Passing By*, n. 37)

It is not like a material push, but the abundance of light, of doctrine; the spiritual stimulus of your prayer and your work, which is an authentic witness of doctrine; the cluster of sacrifices, which you know how to offer; the smile, which comes to your mouth, because you are a child of God(...). Add to all this your flair and your human sympathy, and we will have the contents of the *compelle intrare*. (*Letter*, 24.10.1942)



## Attraction



How clear it is, then, that the Work grows and should always grow in an atmosphere of freedom, by presenting to others – with determination and simplicity – the dazzling beauty of living close to God.

(Ocáriz, *Pastoral Letter*, 9.1.2018, n. 15.)

# 'Holy Shamelessness'

If you have holy shamelessness, you won't be worried by the thought of 'what will people say?' or 'what can they have said?' (*The Way*, n. 391)





## Freedom and Commitment

If a man does not allow himself to be bounded by noble and clean commitments with which he accepts the responsibility of a family, of a profession, of a citizen's duties ..., if a man has no initiative to make these decisions, life itself will impose them against his will. Then will come the reaction of rebellion, of violence, of sliding down a path that is not Christian. When all this happens, that soul is even more conditioned than those who willingly wanted to accept commitments which apparently restricted their freedom – just in appearance, because all the time they were free. (St Josemaría, 1972)



# Freedom is Forever

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God has given us freedom forever; it is not a temporary gift, to employ only during our life here on earth. Freedom, like love, 'never ends' (1 Cor 13:8). But it continues in heaven. Our path to heaven is a path towards the freedom of the glory of the children of God (Rom 8:21). In heaven freedom not only won't disappear, but rather will attain its fullness in embracing God's love.

(Ocáriz, *Pastoral Letter*, 9.1.2018, n. 16.)