

# FAITH AND REASON

**Christian life is a journey of freedom:** What is Christian freedom? Today, we will reflect on this topic: Christian freedom. Freedom is a treasure that is truly appreciated only when it is lost. For many of us who are used to living in freedom, it often appears to be an acquired right rather than a gift and a legacy to be preserved. How many misunderstandings there are around the topic of freedom, and how many different views have clashed over the centuries! In the case of the Galatians, the Apostle could not bear that those Christians, after having known and accepted the truth of Christ, allowed themselves to be attracted to deceptive proposals, moving from freedom to slavery: from the liberating presence of Jesus to slavery to sin, to legalism, and so forth. Even today, legalism is one of our problems for many Christians who take refuge in legalism, in sophistry. Paul therefore invites the Christians to remain firm in the freedom they had received in baptism, without allowing themselves to be put once again under the “yoke of slavery” (Gal 5:1). He is rightly protective of this freedom. He is aware that some “false brethren” — this is what he calls them — have crept into the community to “spy out” — this is what he writes — “our freedom which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage” — to turn backward. And Paul cannot tolerate this. A proclamation that would preclude freedom in Christ would never be evangelical. It might be Pelagian or Jansenist or something like that, but not evangelical. One can never force in the name of Jesus; one cannot make anyone a slave in the name of Jesus who makes us free. Freedom is a gift which was given to us at baptism. But Saint Paul’s teaching about freedom is, above all, positive. The Apostle proposes Jesus’ teaching that we find in the Gospel of John as well: “If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free”. The call is thus above all to remain in Jesus, the source of truth who makes us free. Christian freedom, therefore, is founded on two fundamental pillars: first, the grace of the Lord Jesus; second, the truth that Christ reveals to us and which is he himself. First of all, it is a gift from the Lord. The freedom that the Galatians had received — and we, like them, at our baptism — is the fruit of the death and resurrection of Jesus. The Apostle concentrates his entire preaching on Christ, who had liberated him from the bonds of his past life: only from Him do the fruits of the new life according to the Spirit flow. In fact, the truest freedom, that from slavery of sin, flows from the Cross of Christ. We are freed from the slavery of sin by the Cross of Christ. God placed the source of the liberation of the human person precisely there where Jesus allowed himself to be nailed, making himself a slave. This never ceases to amaze us: that the place where we are stripped of every freedom, that is, death, might become the source of freedom. But this is the mystery of God’s love! It is not easily understood, but rather lived. Jesus himself had proclaimed it when he said: “For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again”. Jesus achieves complete freedom by giving himself up to death; He knows that only in this way could he obtain life for everyone. Paul, we know, had experienced first-hand this mystery of love. This is why he says to the Galatians, using an extremely bold expression: “I have been crucified with Christ”. In that act of supreme union with the Lord, he knew he had received the greatest gift of his life: freedom. On the Cross, in fact, he had nailed “the flesh with its passions and desires”. We understand how much faith filled the Apostle, how great was his intimacy with Jesus. And while, on the one hand, we feel that we are lacking this, on the other hand, the Apostle’s testimony encourages us to progress in this life of freedom. The Christian is free, should be free, and is called not to return to being a slave of precepts and strange things. The second pillar of freedom is the truth. In this case as well, it is necessary to remember that the truth of faith is not an abstract theory, but the reality of the living Christ, who directly touches the daily and overall meaning of personal life. How many people there are who have never studied, who do not even know how to read and write, but who have understood Christ’s message well, who have this wisdom that makes them free. It is Christ’s wisdom that entered through the Holy Spirit at baptism. How many people do we find who live the life of Christ more than great theologians, for example, offering a tremendous witness of the freedom of the Gospel. Freedom makes one free to the extent to which it transforms a person’s life and directs it toward the good. In order to be truly free, we not only need to know ourselves on the psychological level, but above all to practice truth in ourselves on a more profound level and there, in our heart, open ourselves to the grace of Christ. Truth must disturb us let us return to this extremely Christian word: restlessness. We know that there are Christians who are never restless: their lives are always the same, there is no movement in their hearts, they lack restlessness. Why? Because restlessness is a sign that the Holy Spirit is working inside us and freedom is an active freedom, that comes from the grace of the Holy Spirit. This is why I say that freedom must disturb us, it must constantly question us, so that we might move ever deeper into what we really are. In this way we will discover that the journey of truth and freedom is an arduous one that lasts a lifetime. Remaining free is arduous, it is a struggle; but it is not impossible. Take courage, let us make progress regarding this, it will be good for us. It is a journey in which the Love that comes from the Cross guides and sustains us: the Love that reveals truth to us and grants us freedom. And this is the way to happiness. Freedom makes us free, it makes us joyful, it makes us happy... **Pope Francis told the faithful gathered in the Paul VI Hall for the General Audience**

**When will the happy time come** when the divine Mary will be established Mistress and Queen of all hearts, in order that she may subject them fully to the empire of her great and holy Jesus? When will souls breathe Mary as the body breathes air? When that time comes, wonderful things will happen in those lowly places where the Holy Ghost, finding His dear spouse, as it were, reproduced, in all souls, shall come in with abundance, and fill them to overflowing with His gifts, and particularly with the gift of wisdom, to work miracles of grace... **St. Louis de Montfort**

**In our self-centered culture and classic American emphasis on work**, we often feel we have to accomplish something during our times of prayer before the Blessed Sacrament. We rate our experience by how 'good' our prayer was, how heartfelt our devotion was, or how focused we could remain. Yet prayer and contemplation are fundamentally God's work, in which we are invited to participate. We need only to give Him the opening, and He will do the rest. By coming to adoration, we are handing Him the keys to our hearts, allowing the rays of His love and grace to bathe our souls in the light of His Presence, as the rays of the sunbathe our bodies in light. If we can take the time to pull away from the busyness and distractions of life and just sit at His feet, He will lead us... **Poor Clares of Perpetual Adoration**

#### **A Thought For the Day**

**Sunday** Put your heart at His feet. It is the gift He loves most.

**Monday** Arm yourself with prayer rather than a sword; wear humility rather than fine clothes.

**Tuesday** The Lord has turned all our sunsets into sunrise.

**Wednesday** While the world changes, the cross stands firm.

**Thursday** Commitment is doing what you said you would do, after the feeling you said it in has passed.

**Friday** Here is a rule for everyday life: Do not do anything which you cannot offer to God.

**Saturday** Keep the joy of loving God in your heart and share this joy with all you meet, especially your family. Be holy.

**Teach me your way**, O Lord, that I may walk in your truth; give me an undivided heart to revere your name. I give thanks to you, O Lord my God, with my whole heart, and I will glorify your name forever. For great is your steadfast love toward me." **Psalm 86:11-13**

**The Eucharist is the bread that gives strength...** It is at once the most eloquent proof of His love and the most powerful means of fostering His love in us. He gives Himself every day so that our hearts as burning coals may set afire the hearts of the faithful... **St. Damien of Molokai**

**No one can fail to understand that the Divine Eucharist** bestows upon the Christian people an incomparable dignity. Not only while the Sacrifice is offered and the Sacrament is received, but as long as the Eucharist is kept in our churches and oratories, Christ is truly Emmanuel, that is, 'God with us'. Day and night He is in our midst, He dwells with us, full of grace and truth. He restores morality, nourishes virtues, consoles the afflicted, strengthens the weak. He proposes His own example to those who come to Him that all may learn to be, like Himself, meek and humble of heart and to seek not their own interests but those of God. Anyone who approaches this august Sacrament with special devotion and endeavors to return generous love for Christ's own infinite love, will experience and fully understand—not without spiritual joy and fruit—how precious is the life hidden with Christ in God and how great is the value of converse with Christ, for there is nothing more consoling on earth, nothing more efficacious for advancing along the road of holiness... **Bl. Pope Paul VI**

*If we wish to make any progress in the service of God we must begin every day of our life with new eagerness. We must keep ourselves in the presence of God as much as possible and have no other view or end in all our actions but the divine honor.*

In His Will is Our Peace

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