



To speak today about freedom is to enter one of the most frequently used... and yet most misunderstood concepts of our time. Freedom is invoked to justify decisions, lifestyles, and even laws; yet it is rarely seriously reflected upon what it truly means to be free. From the perspective of Catholic tradition, freedom is not doing whatever one wants without limits, but **the capacity to choose the good with responsibility, oriented toward truth and love.**

In this context, justice —the cardinal virtue that consists in giving each person what is due to them— cannot exist without a properly understood freedom. For only a free person can be just, and only one who seeks justice is truly free.

As Sacred Scripture teaches:

“You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:32).

This article seeks to illuminate, from a theological and pastoral perspective, the profound link between freedom and justice, addressing its essential dimensions and offering concrete keys to live them in today’s world.

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## a) Freedom: the gift that makes us truly human

For an act to be authentically human —and therefore morally good or bad— it must be carried out freely. This is no small detail: it is the core of human dignity. God has not created us as automatons, but as persons capable of loving, and love is only possible where there is freedom.

Freedom, therefore, is **the capacity to act in one way or another**, to choose between different options. But this definition, although correct, remains incomplete if it is not complemented by its essential orientation.

True freedom:

- **Must conform to truth:** not every choice is equally valid; freedom does not create



truth but recognizes it.

- **Must always choose what is best:** it is not enough to choose; one must choose well.
- **Requires order in the use of things:** inner disorder enslaves, even if outwardly it seems like freedom.

From moral theology, freedom is not an end in itself, but a means to attain the supreme good: God. Therefore, the more freedom is oriented toward the good, the more it grows; and the more it turns away, the more it weakens.

Saint Paul expresses it clearly:

*“You were called to freedom, brothers. But do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love” (Galatians 5:13).*

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## b) End and means: the coherence demanded by justice

Every human action has an end. No one acts without a reason. However, it is not enough to have a good intention: it is also necessary that the means used are right.

Here we find one of the most frequent errors in contemporary mentality: **thinking that the end justifies the means**. This idea, deeply contrary to Christian morality, destroys justice at its root.

- **The end** is the intention: what we seek.
- **The means** are the ways we use to achieve it.

An action will be morally good only if **both —end and means— are good**.

One cannot do evil in order to achieve good. One cannot lie to help, nor deceive to obtain justice. Because evil, even if it seems useful in the short term, corrupts the heart and destroys true freedom.

Justice demands coherence: not only wanting what is right, but doing it rightly.



## c) Libertinism: when freedom becomes slavery

The greatest enemy of freedom is not the law, but its distortion: libertinism.

Libertinism consists in **misusing freedom**, that is, choosing evil believing that this makes us freer. But the exact opposite happens: sin does not liberate, it enslaves.

Jesus Christ warns strongly:

| *“Everyone who sins is a slave to sin” (John 8:34).*

The misuse of freedom produces:

- **Imperfections:** errors, blunders, rash decisions.
- **Vices:** negative habits that take root and condition our behavior.

Human experience confirms a profound spiritual truth: **every choice leaves a mark**. Choosing good strengthens freedom; choosing evil weakens it.

Ascetical tradition points out that healing a vice requires time, effort, and grace. It is not enough to want to change: one must persevere in doing good. Thus, it is said that for every year of disorder, several years of contrary virtue may be needed to fully restore the soul.

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## d) Knowledge: the light that guides freedom

There can be no full freedom without knowledge. For an act to be truly free, it is necessary **to know clearly what one is doing**.

Knowledge is the function of the intellect, and it fulfills two essential tasks:

- **It informs us of what we are doing.**
- **It shows us the possible consequences** (pros and cons).



Without knowledge, freedom becomes blind. And a blind freedom is not fully human.

Here the formation of conscience comes into play, so necessary today. We live in a culture saturated with information, yet poor in wisdom. Opinion is confused with truth, emotion with judgment, impulse with decision.

Therefore, the Christian is called to form his or her intellect:

- By meditating on the Word of God
- By knowing the teaching of the Church
- By seeking truth with humility

Only in this way can freedom be correctly oriented toward the good.

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## e) Consent: the inner “yes” that defines our life

Once the intellect knows, the will comes into play. And here appears consent.

Consent is **the free acceptance of what is known**. It is the act by which the person says: “yes, I want this,” assuming its consequences.

This element is fundamental in Catholic morality, because it determines the degree of responsibility for our actions.

Consent implies:

- **Accepting the consequences of what we do**
- **Assuming our personal involvement**

It is not enough to know what is right or wrong. It is necessary to will it. Holiness does not consist only in knowing the truth, but in adhering to it with one’s whole soul.

Here lies the authenticity of freedom: in that inner, silent act where we decide who we want to be.

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## Conclusion: freedom that leads to justice and fulfillment

Freedom is not an arbitrary power, but a gift oriented toward the good. It is not absolute independence, but the capacity to love responsibly.

When freedom is united with truth, justice is born. When it is separated from it, disorder appears.

Today more than ever, the world needs to rediscover this truth: **we are not freer when we do what we want, but when we want what is good.**

Authentic freedom does not consist in choosing between good and evil, but in **being able to always choose the good**, even when it is difficult.

Because only that freedom builds, heals, elevates... and leads to God.

And in the end, that is the greatest justice: to live according to the divine plan, giving to God what is God's and to our neighbor what is due.

May our freedom not be an excuse for selfishness, but a path to holiness. For only the truly free person can be truly just... and truly happy.