



### Liberation

**God has gifted us with free will. Being human involves having and making choices. This is what differentiates us from other life forms. Human dignity flowers when people act according to an informed and responsible choice which is motivated and prompted from within rather than from blind impulse or external pressure. Human freedom allows us to influence the state of things outside ourselves as well as to determine our own growth. We have an active role in life as we choose between good or evil.**

**With the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we seek to be both liberated from evil and free to act for the good.**

The Western notion of liberation and freedom has its roots in biblical heritage. God's revelation to the people of Israel was one of liberation. They were led to freedom from the oppression of slavery in Egypt so they could live as God's People. They chose to honour the obligations of the covenant, though at times they failed, choosing instead to follow false idols. Prophets were called by God to turn them back from the consequences of their wrong choices.

Jesus, the Incarnation of God, entered history and revealed the fundamental meaning of liberation: the freedom to live without fear - in truth, love and hope according to God's will. This is the Good News of Christ Jesus: the liberation of the whole person and of all people so that each can fulfill their potential 'to the full' (Jn 10:10).

But human criteria of judgement, of determining values, points of interest, lines of thought, sources of inspiration and models of life can be at odds with the Word of God. Many people, organisations and nations are being seduced into seeing freedom only in terms of better technology, more autonomy, more power, greater wealth and more material possessions.

#### Catholic Social Teaching Principle:

**Global Solidarity and Development.** Authentic development means full human development. It should respect and promote personal, social, economic, and political rights, including the rights of nations and of peoples. Accumulating material goods and idolising technical resources will be unsatisfactory and debasing if there is no respect for the moral, cultural, and spiritual dimensions of the person.

*You were called to freedom brothers and sisters... through love become slaves to one another. Gal 5:13*

These are the false idols of today. The search for 'quality of life' revolves around 'having more', rather than 'being more'. Are we living under an illusion? We choose not to see that false gods enslave people and the environment.

In our misguided search for greater freedom, we seek more power and control. The Gospel can liberate the oppressed. Freedom is not about trying to dominate others and the natural world. True freedom is about 'letting go and letting God'. We need to listen to the prophets who speak of the goodness and the truth that liberates all people to live life for God, Earth, each other and a just and peaceful world.

*"The crisis of modern democracy is a profound one. Free elections, a free press and an independent judiciary mean little when the free market has reduced them to commodities available on sale to the highest bidder."*

Arundhati Roy

### PARABLE REFLECTION

#### The Rich Fool

Luke 12:16-21

**'One's life is not made secure by what one owns, even when one has more than one needs.'** (Lk 12:15)

This parable tells of the man who, on gathering a rich and plentiful harvest, decides to knock down his existing barns and build bigger ones to store his grain. He wants to 'have plenty of good things laid by for many years to come: take things easy, eat, drink, have a good time.' (Lk 12:19).

He is under the illusion that gathering possessions gives a power that leads to freedom and the good life. But that very night he was to lose his life. It was too late for him to learn that his possessions were of little value to him.

True human liberation lies not in gathering power and material possessions, but in using what we have been given or have earned for the good of others.

#### Earth Charter Principle 10:

Build democratic societies that are just, participatory, sustainable and peaceful.

# Pontius' Puddle



Economics and technology have no meaning except from the human person whom they should serve. And people are only truly human in as far as, masters of their own acts and judges of their worth, they are authors of their own advancement, in keeping with the nature given to them by their Creator.

Pope Paul VI, Populorum Progressio, 34

## FACTFILE

Slavery is lack of freedom and can take many forms:

- **Child Labour:** Globally, 246 million children & adolescents (one sixth of those between age 5 and 17) are obliged to work. Of these, 179 million are employed in hazardous situations. Their labour enables cheap goods to be produced for our consumption. Unicef 2004
- **Child soldiers:** About 300,000 children and adolescents between 10 and 17 have been forced into being soldiers by rebel groups or governments in 30 countries. Ozspirit 2005
- **Consumption:** Since 1950 we have consumed more goods and services than all the previous generations combined: consumption of energy, steel & timber more than doubled; fossil fuel use and car ownership increased 4 times, meat production & fish catch increased 5 times, paper use increased 6 times and air travel increased 11 times. A 10 fold reduction in resources consumption in industrialized countries will be needed for adequate resources to be available for developing countries.  
Prof Richard Steiner, Seattle Post-Intelligencer June 11 2004
- **Human trafficking and the sex trade:** It is estimated that 1.2 million children are trafficked globally every year. These children often find themselves trapped in forced labour, sexual slavery, servitude or prostitution. Many women find themselves in the same situation. It is estimated that there are up to 1000 trafficked women currently working in the Australian sex industry. There are 3,000 children, some younger than 10 years, in the Australian sex industry. www.forceten.org.au

A human being is a part of the whole that we call the universe, a part limited in time and space.

People experience themselves, their thoughts and feelings, as something separated from the rest – a kind of optical illusion of their consciousness.

This illusion is a prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for only the few people nearest us.

Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living beings and all of nature.

Albert Einstein

## FOR DISCUSSION

*What does liberation mean to you?*

*What are the things to which we are enslaved?*

*Does democracy mean freedom for all?*

*Does freedom mean simply being able to do whatever you want?*

*In what ways does slavery still exist today?*

*Why do you think this is?*

*Who are the people whose liberation is a priority?*

*What needs to be done for their/our liberation?*

*In what ways does Earth need liberating?*

*What does it mean to 'let go and let God'?*

***Excessive access to all kinds of things -- sometimes called consumerism -- enslaves people and does not make them happy.***

***The more one possesses, the more one wants, while the deeper human hopes remain unsatisfied and even stifled.***

***"Having" more things does not necessarily mean "being" more or "being" better. "Having" only helps us when it contributes to a more complete "being."***

Pope John Paul II, Sollicitudo Rei Socialis, 28

## FOR ACTION

Take time to reflect on your personal 'needs' and 'wants'. What do you need to do to reduce consumption and simplify your life?

Reflect on personal addictions and take steps to become free of them.

Join a campaign which is aimed at freeing those in slavery, eg, the global Make Poverty History campaign.

Be alert to attempts to restrict human rights and resist them.

Form a media watch group to examine advertising and pushes towards consumer growth in media. How can this trend be resisted?

## USEFUL WEBSITES:

[www.iabolish.org](http://www.iabolish.org)  
The Antislavery Portal

[www.catalyst-for-renewal.com.au](http://www.catalyst-for-renewal.com.au)  
A Catholic Forum for Discussion

[www.makepovertyhistory.org](http://www.makepovertyhistory.org)  
Make Poverty History

[www.onlineopinion.com.au](http://www.onlineopinion.com.au)  
An e-journal of social and political debate in Australia

[www.child-soldiers.org](http://www.child-soldiers.org)  
Coalition fighting the use of child soldiers

