

**“I have spoken, or rather shouted, about my love for personal freedom”**

Freedom of conscience: no! How many evils this lamentable error, which permits actions against the dictates that lie deepest in oneself, has brought about in nations and individuals. Freedom "of consciences", yes: for it means the duty to follow that interior command ... ah, but after receiving a serious formation! (Furrow, 389)

August 8

Throughout my years as a priest, whenever I have spoken, or rather shouted, about my love for personal freedom, I have noticed some people reacting with distrust, as if they suspected that my defense of freedom could endanger the faith. Such faint-hearted people can rest assured. The only freedom that can assail the faith is a misinterpreted freedom, an aimless freedom, one without objective principles, one that is lawless and irresponsible. In a word, licence. Unfortunately, this is what some people are advocating, and their claim does indeed constitute a threat to the faith.

This is why it is inaccurate to speak of *freedom of conscience*, thereby implying that it may be morally right for someone to reject God. We have

already seen that it is in our power to oppose God's plans for salvation. It is in our power, but we should not do so. If someone adopted this attitude deliberately, he would be sinning, by breaking the first and most important of the commandments: 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart' [1].

I defend with all my strength *the freedom of consciences* [2], which means that no one can licitly prevent a man from worshipping God. The legitimate hunger for truth must be respected. Man has a grave obligation to seek God, to know him and worship him, but no one on earth is permitted to impose on his neighbour the practice of a faith he lacks; just as no one can claim the right to harm those who have received the faith from God.

Our Holy Mother the Church has always spoken out in favour of

freedom and has always rejected fatalism, both in its ancient and more modern versions. She has pointed out that each soul is master of its own destiny, for good or ill: ‘and those who have been true to the good will go to eternal life; those who have committed evil, to eternal fire’ [3]. (Friends of God, 32-33)

[1] Deut 6:5

[2] Leo XIII, *Libertas praestantissimum*, 20 June 1888, ASS 20 (1888), 606

[3] Athanasian Creed