

Reflections

Father Nicolas Schwizer

39 – July 15, 2008

The Free Man/Woman

Very often, in the area of authority, conflicts with one's own freedom arise. Let us think about the rebelliousness of our adolescent children. What happens is that authority frequently limits personal freedom. It has to do this when prioritized interests are at play. Individual freedom cannot exist without limitations within a community like the family, movements, Church, and society. Therefore, the education of our freedom is important. It has to be a conditional freedom, a freedom subject to superior values and interests.

We are a heap of prejudices. Selfishness, fear, habits, and society make us prefer beforehand, conduct which is more comfortable, more secure, and more accepted. Often we make decisions which we believe are our personal option. In reality, they have been dictated to us and imposed on us deceitfully by all kinds of influences which determine our journey. For a decision to be really personal, it has to be totally free. Freedom from prejudices and fears can only be given by the Spirit. If decisions are difficult in our personal life, they are even more so in social life. There, more than anywhere else, the vision of the Spirit and the valor which power inspires is needed.

A popular definition of the free man/woman says that the man/woman *"knows what he/she wants, wants what he/she knows, does what he/she wants and loves what he/she does."* Therefore, I would like to see with you for a moment, these great steps in the education of freedom.

1. Know what I want. First, I must clarify and define my most personal values. It is like preparing my personal scale of values, my priorities in life. Then I also have to formulate my personal goals, know what I want in life. In this overcrowded society, often my goals are dictated to me from the outside; I do not live my own and original life. I must become independent from public opinion, I must free myself from social pressures.....from fashion, from the influence of propaganda, and from a thousand ways in which I can be influenced from the outside.

I have to motivate myself to specify personal objectives, long and short-term goals, and, of course, periodically revise and evaluate my values and goals.

2. Want what I know. After knowing what I really want, the second step is to want what I know. We are talking about what I really want, that for which I have been made and not about what personal whims seek. This is a decisive step for the interior cohesion of the personality. It is not only about knowing, but wanting. I have to affirm my life's desires and goals with my will and with my heart. This helps me to be coherent with myself.

3. Do what I want. The point is to do what I really want and not what my primitive self motivates me to do. Often we use the concept "do what I want," not in the sense of true freedom, but in the mistaken way which pushes toward selfishness or personal stubbornness. Here we have to discern and do things based on personal values. It deals with doing what I think is best for me and for others. That truly makes me free.

4. Love what I do. The free man/woman who knows what he/she wants, wants what he/she knows and does what he/she truly wants is able to love what he/she does. When these conditions are not present, often he/she will come to hate or despise what he/she does. On the other hand, it is very human to not do what one wants, but rather to do what one does not want. St. Paul's experience is: "I don't do the good I want to do; instead, I do the evil that I do not want to do" (Rom 7:19).

We are limited beings, but in spite of that, we have to strive to grow toward freedom.

Questions for reflection

1. Do I consider myself a free person?
2. Do I have specific values and goals?
3. Do I like my job, am I fulfilled in my profession?

If you wish to subscribe, comment on the text or give a testimony, write to: pn.reflexiones@gmail.com

Translation: Carlos Cantú Family Federation La Feria, Texas USA 062508