

Reflections

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INNER FREEDOM

How do we define inner freedom? It is the ability to decide for oneself and to carry out what has been decided, with certain autonomy and personal independence and without being carried away by some inner bondage or exterior pressures. But it is a bound (tied up) freedom, attached, because its goal is to be totally free for God, to his wish and Will. Some obstacles are opposed to complete freedom:

Inner bondage. Especially our own attachment to our own capricious self with its multiple roots. We can name for example: the tyranny of instincts and feelings, vices and other disorders, fears and anxieties, complexes and prejudices, weak and inconstant will.

The first response to these personal limitations is to know ourselves, to know our limitations and bindings, our faults regarding freedom. And then surrender them to a consistent self-education, a daily struggle to free ourselves from them.

Exterior pressures. Another area of strong influence is the pressures from others: pressures from persons close to us “who only want the best for us.” And with that motive we are invaded. Often we permit it because we feel insecure, we do not know what to do. Or we ourselves look at others out of the corner of our eye to see how they do it, how does the majority do it. Or we want to look good before others so they will not criticize us.

But I am me. I have to live my own life with my style and particular rhythm, my limitations and my originalities. My priorities determine my decisions. Others cannot decide for me, with their requests, suggestions and pressures. It is true, before the needs of others, I have to remain sensible. But they cannot subdue my inner freedom, obligate me to do something I do not want to do. In this, at the same time, tenderness and firmness have to be united.

Another danger are the **means of communication** which want to pressure and manipulate us. As a result of this, these means often think for us, they decide for us, they plan the future for us. And perhaps we permit them to impose everything on us. And slowly we become, little by little, slaves to public opinion, mass-men.

The Spanish author, Enrique Rojas, calls these means “the information farce:” a river of data and news, sensations and impressions with the final aim: what the majority says is the truth.

And thus we lose the ability to take an inner position when facing what we hear, see or read. The fruitfulness of this mentality is the man-cinema or the man-television. It is the broken -man who lives from sensation to sensation, from impression to impression, full speed ahead, without stopping, without compass and without meaning. A typical symbol of this is zapping. It is that man who has lost his soul, who is discontinuation personified, perfect depersonalization.

And there also is fashion, the axle around which post-modern society rotates. The “love magazines” function as transmitters: for example, the lite-woman imitates the style of dress of the personalities which appear in the magazines, their expressions, their style of life which is empty and broken. And this ends in frivolity and superficiality.

Evidently we have to be more critical when facing modern society and when facing the values and anti-values it promotes. And we also have to try to make a serene summary of all the news and impressions which bombard us.

Another important topic for us is that of occupations and commitments and apostolic tasks. Many of us are very occupied people – and occupied people are important people. Nevertheless, it might be that we are simply people addicted to work. Perhaps there is much of Martha in us and very little of Mary. And perhaps in spite of it we cannot fulfill everything. Then, what can we do?

First, we would have to be clear about our personal priorities. To make a list of priorities is very helpful, especially in times of overload. And the other: perhaps we do not know how to say no when something is asked of us? Also in the apostolate: the apostolic “no” is as important as the apostolic “yes.” Thus I can dedicate myself to that apostolate for which I am inclined and have charisma for. When some task is proposed to me, it is better to not accept it right away, but to ask for time to think it over or to discuss it with one’s spouse (if one is married).

Questions for reflection

1. Which are my inner bondages and exterior pressures which impede my acting with freedom?

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