

God & Caesar: Summer Sessions on Catholic Social Doctrine
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Father Andrew Clark, Presenter

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AND THE CONSCIENCE

Religion is the public profession and worship of the Creator.

Catholic Understanding of Freedom:

A power of the soul by which we choose excellence and perfection, to choose evil is to act against the gift of freedom. This power resides with the person as a whole (Intellect and Will together) i.e. driving is for the purpose of arriving.

Enlightenment Understanding of Freedom:

A power of the soul by which we are capable of choosing between contraries without any external pressure, being able to choose between good and evil is essential to freedom. This power resides within the Will alone. i.e. one is not free to drive unless one is free to crash.

Authority is a positive good that orders the world not a necessary evil.

Historical Development –

Pope Gregory XVI – John XXIII

Condemnation of Rationalism to the dignity of the human person.

Vatican II –

Individuals as well as communities have the obligation to pursue the truth, therefore, communities also have a right to religious expression and the right not to be coerced.

Religious Liberty is the right to not be *coerced* to accept religious belief contrary to one's conscience. This right is a corollary of every individual's and every community's *obligation* to pursue the truth and cling to it when it has been found. The pursuit of the truth being the *primary responsibility* from which the protection against coercion flows.