

Freedom in Christ

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October 13, 2026

In the readings today, Paul and Jesus are speaking about freedom from the law and freedom in Christ: to be free from the bondage of the law, to be free in the person of our Savior Jesus Christ.

And this is how the Catechism of the Catholic Church defines freedom in Christ.

Freedom in Christ is power rooted in reason and will—and there, I’m going to add a parenthesis—conformed to Christ. Power rooted in reason and will, reason and will conformed to Christ, in order to choose good, truth, and that which is directed to God.

The bad news is, it’s often a lifelong struggle to attain that freedom.

That’s part of our quest for holiness, because there’s so many things that can compromise our freedom in Christ.

Sin. You know, oftentimes we have to fight these lifelong battles because there are certain sins that rule our lives and hold us in bondage. From early years, we can grow up being prideful and self-righteous and impatient or jealous.

Those kinds of sins compromise our freedom in Christ and our ability, our power, to do what is good and true and directed towards God.

Addiction can really compromise our freedom in Christ because it binds us. It binds us to something that is physically and spiritually unhealthy for us.

Physical and mental illness compromise our freedom in Christ.

Fear compromises our freedom in Christ. That runs from the sublime to the ridiculous. There’s fear of death and fear of not getting likes on Facebook. All of those kinds of fears compromise our freedom in Christ, which is why Jesus said that we need perfect love to cast out fear.

Bad catechesis. Shame on Holy Mother Church for not teaching us well over these past 75 years. Many of us grew up in a Church that said a good Catholic was a Catholic that keeps all the rules. That’s exactly what Jesus and Saint Paul

are saying is not a good Catholic. A good Catholic is someone who intentionally tries to follow Jesus Christ.

And of course, then, hardships in life, everyday hardships, can compromise our freedom to be with Christ and to choose what is good and true, directed towards God.

We've got the great example of Saint Maximilian Kolbe. So some might say well, he wasn't free at all because he was imprisoned in Auschwitz.

But we see how he exercised, in his imprisonment, his freedom in Christ by exercising his power, his reason and his will, to choose what was good and true, directed towards God, by following the commandment or example of Jesus to lay down his life for another.

So even in life, when we undergo hardships and we don't think that we have choices or much freedom, no one can take away from us our freedom in Christ.

So how do we know when we have that freedom?

I think in our spiritual lives, signs that we are living in that freedom that Christ wants us to have is when our lives are grounded in Christ in a way that gives our lives meaning and direction. When our lives are filled with a kind of stability and peace, not regarding external circumstances, but feeling a deep-down rootedness and peace and joy.

So let us pray today that through Saint Paul and our Lord's words to us, that we will take to heart that as we strive for holiness, what we are striving for is really freedom in Christ.

Through the grace of this sacrament, may the Lord help us to experience that freedom and to experience it in the full.