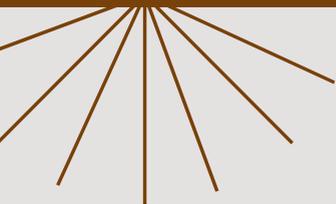


“PILGRIMS OF HOPE”

Program of Spiritual Formation
of Ukrainian Youth for the Jubilee Year



4. THE GUIDE



Meeting 4
April 2025

4. Freedom

Holy Door



4.1 Prayer

In the name of the Father,
and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen. O Heavenly King.
The Lord's Prayer. Hail Mary.



4.2 Patron Saint

Saint John Paul II

Saint John Paul II (1920-2005) is one of the most prominent figures of the 20th century. In his secular life, Karol Wojtyla grew up in Poland during a time of political turmoil - he experienced German occupation and then Soviet dictatorship. At that time, people were deprived of many rights: freedom of speech, freedom of religion, even the opportunity to speak openly about their national identity.

One of the key appeals of his pontificate was "Do not be afraid! Open the door to Christ!". The saint teaches that freedom is not just the ability to do whatever you want, but a responsible choice of good.



4. Freedom

Holy Door



4.2 Patron Saint

Saint John Paul II

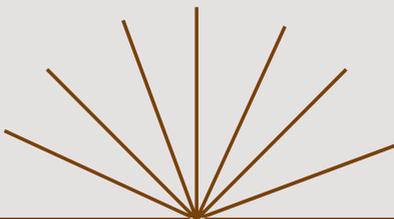
Freedom does not exist without truth. A person who lives in untruth becomes a slave - to sin, fear, and the manipulations of society. But whoever lives in the truth of Christ is truly free (John 8:32).

Freedom is always responsibility. Being free means not just avoiding coercion, but taking responsibility for oneself and others: for one's faith, moral choices, for those around one.

Freedom is a sacrifice for the sake of love. He said that the greatest freedom is freedom from oneself, from selfishness, from the fear of difficulties.

He repeatedly emphasized that the real danger for man is passivity, indifference and comfort. He called on young people: "You do not need a life that allows you to drift with the flow! You need a life that is a real adventure!"; "To be human is to be responsible"; "No one is so poor that he cannot give something important to others".

The life and teachings of Saint John Paul II beautifully illustrate that freedom is not anarchy, not a selfish choice of comfort, but a responsibility before God and one's neighbors.



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Holy Door



4.3 God's Word

The Gospel of John (4:6-20, 25-30)

Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon. When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?" (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.[a]) Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water." "Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his livestock?" Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life." The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water." He told her, "Go, call your husband and come back." "I have no husband," she replied. Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true." "Sir," the woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem." The woman said, "I know that Messiah" (called Christ) "is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us." Then Jesus declared, "I, the one speaking to you—I am he." Just then his disciples returned and were surprised to find him talking with a woman. But no one asked, "What do you want?" or "Why are you talking with her?" Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?" They came out of the town and made their way toward him.



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4.3 God's Word

Reflections

At the beginning of this passage, Jesus returns to Galilee, passing through Samaria, a land that the Jews considered foreign and hostile. At noon, at the hottest time of the day, He stops at a well, where He meets a woman who has come to draw water. Jesus speaks to her, breaking the social and religious taboos of His time.

The Samaritan woman is a woman who is condemned because of her lifestyle. She came to get water at an unusual hour to avoid human gazes. However, in her conversation with Jesus, it becomes clear that He knows her life in the smallest details. But this is not a condemnation - Jesus does not condemn her, but looks at her with the eyes of truth. In His presence, her past actions take on a new meaning, because He sees not only mistakes, but also the true depth of her soul.

God's love grants freedom - the freedom to know the truth about ourselves, to accept our uniqueness, our strengths and weaknesses. Having felt this gaze of mercy, the Samaritan woman no longer identifies herself with human condemnation. She gains a new identity - not a woman who is despised, but one whom God loves.

True freedom comes when we realize that God is wrong and loves us as we are. Then our lives, our choices, even our defeats become a gift. And this freedom has the power to change not only us, but also those around us. The Samaritan woman, who until recently avoided people, now goes into the city herself to share what has happened to her.

The freedom that God gives is not only a gift, but also a responsibility. If you have experienced it, you are called to carry it to others, to bear witness with your life to that love that changes everything.

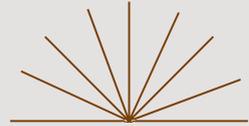


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4.4 Subject block



Freedom/Responsibility is the path you choose on your own, without external pressure or coercion. This is the beauty of traveling through life on a road that has never been traveled before, a road that becomes yours. This is an expression of a person's high calling - the ability to respond to a call with the ease that is characteristic of the wise.

It is not simply to give answers, but to be the answer ourselves. It is not simply to do good, but to live as a called person who fulfills his task. It is the path of educating the heart and will, which learn to be free from themselves, from the shadow of selfishness, from the desire to control everything and everyone.

After all, true freedom is revealed when the heart is open to the good that is around us.

Only in the logic of love can the rules of life be truly understood: not as rigid restrictions, but as signposts that help us find our true essence and live in accordance with it.

The educational task of adults who accompany young people is to help young people find their place in life, not to tie them to themselves. Because true love is not about holding back, but about opening up space for others to grow.





4.5 Personal reflections

- When did you truly feel free? What happened then? Who was there with you?
- True freedom is a sense of responsibility for seeking the good for and in others. How does this idea contradict the way freedom is usually understood in the world?
- How in your life today can you be an answer, not just an answerer?
- Are you trying to exercise your will to free yourself from selfishness, from the desire to control and possess everything?
- Is your heart capable of truly loving, without attachment and possessiveness?
- Have you met people on your life's journey who have true inner freedom? People who are able to make strong, unconventional choices that radiate strength and attractiveness?



4.6 Work in groups

Purpose:

To deepen the understanding of the dynamics of freedom of one's own actions, starting from the possibility of choice and reaching the ability to choose in everyday situations.

Foreword:

Freedom is not spontaneity (I say what I think), not only free choice (I can choose between one drink and another), and even less the ability to self-determination (life and death).

Freedom is having a purpose (as opposed to spontaneity), freedom is the ability to choose (and not just having the opportunity to choose), freedom is accepting life as it is, with its limitations and talents (as opposed to the idea that I can be anyone).





4.6 Work in groups

From this flow the actions of our everyday life, which define part of our essence and with which we must reckon.

Habits are simple, daily, repetitive actions that shape us and at the same time become a trap for our freedom. It is worth realizing that unconscious, ill-considered, unwanted actions undermine our freedom much more than rules or prohibitions.

Practical task:

The group members are arranged in the middle of a spacious room (in one or two rows, depending on the number of people). The leader names one of the pairs of opposite concepts, and everyone must make a choice, moving to one or another wall (i.e. left or right). It is important that the participants make decisions independently, without focusing on others. There is no need to explain the reason for the choice - just move.

Examples of pairs to choose from:

- | | |
|-------------------|-------------------------------|
| White ↔ Black | Sea ↔ Mountains |
| Risotto ↔ Pasta | Pencil ↔ Pen |
| Day ↔ Night | City ↔ Country |
| Cold ↔ Warm | Colors ↔ Grayscale |
| Coca-Cola ↔ Pepsi | Sedan ↔ SUV |
| Sand ↔ Snow | Piercings & Tattoos ↔ Natural |
| Sporty ↔ Casual | Pop ↔ Rock |

The more opposite pairs, the better. It is important that participants make choices quickly, without hesitation, without compromise (there is no middle ground) and regardless of the choices of others.





4.6 Work in groups

Second stage:

Now the participants are placed in the room at an equal distance from each other. They stand straight, feet together, arms at their sides, and gaze straight ahead. Each person places a personal object (e.g., a pen, pencil, hair tie, or something else) in front of their feet. This object symbolizes a starting point that remains in place even when the participant moves.

The next stage is when participants make choices (steps) in response to the proposed situations. The direction of movement changes: now they can take a step forward, backward, right or left.

Example of a situation:

"In the parish, in the catechism school or in the youth space there is a rule not to use swear words, and I follow it well, but outside of it sometimes or often they escape me. What do I think?"

"It doesn't matter, because I am outside the church or the youth space" → take a step back

"I try to control myself outside the church or the youth space" → take a step to the left

The task of the participants is to be honest in their answers. It is important not to give the "right" answers, but to answer as they would actually do in life. After a series of such stories, everyone stops where their own choices have led them.

Examples of other life situations for reflection and choice:

1. The cashier at the supermarket accidentally gives me 200 UAH more, and I only notice it at home. What should I do?

- I think it is too late and keep it for myself → take a step back
- I will return to return the money → take a step left





4.6 Work in groups

2. I signed up for an important meeting at the parish a month before the event. A week before it, a friend invites me to a birthday party that promises to be unforgettable. What do I do?

- I make up an illness and go to the birthday party → take a step back
- I remain faithful to my commitment → take a step left

3. The Pope reminds us that abortion is the greatest crime against the most defenseless. What do I think?

- Dad is a good person, but his views are outdated → take a step back
- I try to deepen my knowledge of the arguments and form my own opinion → take a step left

4. I am in a company, and someone makes a joke about a person of a different skin color. What do I do?

- I laugh with everyone → take a step back
- I apologize for the insult → take a step left

5. A friend posts a rude and obscene post on a social network. How do I react?

- I just scroll through the feed and move on → take a step back
- I ask him to delete the post → take a step left

Final Reflection

1. Who chose you to be where you are right now? (Participants should answer out loud: "I".)

2. Have you noticed that habits, simple and unconscious actions can distance you from the depth and beauty of your heart (symbolized by the object that remained in place)?

3. How important is it for you to make the right choice?

4. Why or for what have you given up your own beliefs?

5. In how many situations could you have answered differently?

This exercise helps to understand that freedom is not just the ability to choose, but the responsibility for who we become through our decisions.



4. Freedom

Holy Door



4.7 Testimony

#pilgrimsofhope
#jubileeofyouth
#jubileeyear2025

We encourage young people to post the hashtags during the month:
#pilgrimsofhope #jubileeofyouth #jubileeyear2025

Freedom is not only the right to make choices, but also the responsibility for these choices. Every our action we take affects others, and it is responsibility that helps maintain harmony and unity. By completing these tasks, you will be able to realize that true freedom is the ability to act consciously, take responsibility, and change the world for the better.

1. "My Responsibility for Freedom" - Write down what true freedom is for you. How do you implement it in your life? What responsibility does it require? It could be daily choices, helping others, honesty in actions, standing up for the truth, or protecting the dignity of people. Share your thoughts with friends or discuss it with your family.
2. "My Freedom Hero" - Choose a historical or contemporary figure who for you is an example of a responsible attitude towards freedom. It can be a spiritual leader, a human rights activist, a military man, a cultural figure, a scientist, or just a person you know who honestly and courageously uses their freedom for the benefit of others. Tell your friends about them, explain why their actions inspire you, and how they embody the balance of freedom and responsibility.
3. "Prayer for Freedom" - For seven days, dedicate a few minutes each day to praying for true freedom - freedom of spirit, conscience, choice, and responsibility. Pray for those who are currently fighting for truth, for those who are seeking change, for the unity and strength of the people. You can write down your thoughts and experiences during this prayer time, and then share them with those who also want to pray for God's true freedom in the world.

Freedom without responsibility is chaos, and responsibility without freedom is slavery. Let us learn to be free and responsible, because this is the key to a harmonious and just society.





4.8 Final prayer

Completion of spiritual work, prayer of choice:
Akathist to the Passion of Christ / Stations of the Cross /
Jesus Prayer / Rosary / Theseus / Prayer in Silence.

From the address of Pope Francis during the prayer vigil for World Youth Day, Campus Misericordiae, Krakow, 30 July 2016

Dear Young Friends, But in life there is another, even more dangerous, kind of paralysis. It is not easy to put our finger on it. I like to describe it as the paralysis that comes from confusing happiness with a sofa. In other words, to think that in order to be happy all we need is a good sofa. A sofa that makes us feel comfortable, calm, safe. A sofa like one of those we have nowadays with a built-in massage unit to put us to sleep. A sofa that promises us hours of comfort so we can escape to the world of videogames and spend all kinds of time in front of a computer screen. A sofa that keeps us safe from any kind of pain and fear. A sofa that allows us to stay home without needing to work at, or worry about, anything.

That is probably the most harmful and insidious form of paralysis, which can cause the greatest harm to young people. And why does this happen Father? Because, little by little, without even realizing it, we start to nod off, to grow drowsy and dull.

For many people in fact, it is much easier and better to have drowsy and dull kids who confuse happiness with a sofa. For many people, that is more convenient than having young people who are alert and searching, trying to respond to God's dream and to all the restlessness present in the human heart.

The truth, though, is something else. Dear young people, we didn't come into this work to "vegetate", to take it easy, to make our lives a comfortable sofa to fall asleep on. No, we came for another reason: to leave a mark. It is very sad to pass through life without leaving a mark.

But when we opt for ease and convenience, for confusing happiness with consumption, then we end up paying a high price indeed: we lose our freedom. There are so many people who do not want the young to be free, there are so many people who do not wish you well, who want you to be drowsy and dull, and never free! No, this must not be so! We must defend our freedom! This is itself a great form of paralysis, whenever we start thinking that happiness is the same as comfort and convenience, that being happy means going through life asleep or on tranquillizers, that the only way to be happy is to live in a haze. Certainly, drugs are bad, but there are plenty of other socially acceptable drugs, that can end up enslaving us just the same. One way or the other, they rob us of our greatest treasure: our freedom. They strip us of our freedom.



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Books:

Annex

“Divergent” - Veronica Roth

The novel explores freedom of choice and responsibility for the decisions made. The main character, Tris, challenges a rigid faction system that attempts to limit individual freedom. This book emphasizes that true freedom is not a chaotic choice, but a conscious pursuit of truth and love, which leads to inner growth.

‘1984’ - George Orwell

The dystopia demonstrates how totalitarianism destroys freedom, controlling thoughts and forcing a person to lose their own responsibility for the truth. In Christianity, freedom is a gift that obliges us to live in truth and love, not in fear and lies (2 Cor 3:17). The book warns against the spiritual slavery that can come through the temptation of power and manipulation.

“The City” - Valerian Pidmohylnyi

About the inner struggle between the freedom of self-realization and responsibility to oneself and others. The main character, Stepan, strives to conquer the city, but his path is full of moral challenges. The book reminds us that true freedom is not only in the pursuit of success, but also in a responsible attitude towards one’s calling and those around us.

“Tiger Hunters” - Ivan Bahryanyi

The novel reflects the struggle for human freedom under totalitarian conditions. The main character, Hryhorii Mnohohrshnyi, flees from the Soviet regime, demonstrating strength of spirit and responsibility for his own life. Reading this book, we come to understand that freedom is inextricably linked with the struggle for truth and dignity, and responsibility before God and others determines true human greatness.



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Movies:

Annex

Green Book, 2018

This film explores the themes of freedom and responsibility through the prism of interracial relationships, human dignity, and moral choice. The main character, Tony Lip, initially acts for personal gain, but gradually, through his friendship with the talented pianist Don Shirley, he realizes responsibility for his actions, discovering true freedom for himself - the freedom of love, justice, and respect for others.

Peaceful Warrior, 2006

The film reveals freedom as an inner state that depends not on circumstances, but on a person's conscious choice. The main character, a young gymnast Dan Millman, goes through a journey from self-confidence and the pursuit of fame to a deeper awareness of his own responsibility for every moment of life. His mentor teaches him that true freedom is not the absence of rules, but the ability to live focused, responsible and with inner peace.

Into the Wild, 2007

A story about the search for freedom that shows that escaping society does not bring true liberation. This film encourages us to understand that freedom without love and community can turn into isolation, and responsibility for others is an integral part of our calling.

The Hunger Games, 2012-2015

The heroine Katniss takes responsibility for others by sacrificing herself, which echoes the evangelical idea of love as self-sacrifice (John 15:13). The film shows the struggle between oppression and freedom, recalling the Christian desire for justice and human dignity.

