



THE JACOB RADER MARCUS CENTER OF THE AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

Preserving American Jewish History

MS-603: Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum Collection, 1945-1992.

Series C: Interreligious Activities. 1952-1992

Box 34, Folder 7, John Paul II [Pope] - film, 1983-1984.

February 21, 1984

AJC Area Directors

Marc H. Tanenbaum

Showing of film on Pope John Paul II, April 22

We have just learned that CBS-TV will be airing the three-hour film on the life of Pope John Paul II on April 22 (8 to 11 p.m., ET).

The enclosed article on the Jewish aspects of the film stresses its potential importance for increasing understanding between Catholics and Jews.

As we did in connection with NBC-TV's miniseries on the Holocaust and on Jesus of Nazareth, I should like to suggest a number of programming possibilities:

1) Local CBS-TV stations will be asked to arrange for a preview of the film for leaders of the Christian and Jewish communities, probably during the week before April 22.

A local interreligious dialogue should be arranged at the station during which Catholic-Jewish relations and anti-Semitism could be discussed. You can play a helpful role by contacting the local CBS-TV management and offer to cooperate in suggesting the best local Christian and Jewish leadership who might be invited for the preview and the dialogue. It would also be helpful to contact the local Catholic Archdiocese's media-communications director with whom you could cooperate. (This article could be distributed as a background for discussion.)

2) Local religious and TV columnists and writers should also be invited to cover the dialogue. References to local Christian leaders identifying themselves with the Pope's stands against Nazism, Communism, and anti-Semitism in their general stories are self-evidently helpful.

3) National Catholic church officials will be calling on local diocesan ecumenical, interreligious and communications contacts to give leadership in arranging dialogues and press conferences. It would be wise to cooperate with them, making available the material in this article.

Given the problems we have with propaganda equating anti-Zionism with racism, etc., this film could be a constructive antidote if creatively used.

Please let me know of whatever developments take place in your community and whether we can be helpful to you.

November 7, 1983

NEW FILM ON POPE JOHN PAUL II IS POSITIVE
CONTRIBUTION TO CATHOLIC-JEWISH RELATIONS

by Marc H. Tanenbaum

(Rabbi Tanenbaum, director of international relations of the American Jewish Committee, served as Jewish consultant to the film on Pope John Paul II.)

A just-completed film on the life and career of Pope John Paul II is, in my judgment, good for the Jews. The two-and-a-half hour film was previewed last week before a predominantly Catholic audience in New York's Lincoln Center and received sustained applause.

Titled simply, "John Paul II," the film dramatization will be shown in Vatican City on Nov. 12, and will be aired over CBS-Television network during February 1984 (exact date not set yet.) According to Allen Morris of Taft Enterprises Company, co-producers with Alvin Cooperman-DePaul Productions, the Pope John Paul film will in time be shown throughout Europe, Africa, Asia, and Latin American in diverse languages and therefore its potential impact is global in scope.

Acted brilliantly by British actor Albert Finney, this Papal life-story contains a number of dramatic scenes of special interest to Jews. The script deals forthrightly with the pervasiveness of anti-Semitism in pre-World War II Poland, the horrors of the Nazi holocaust, and the response of Pope John Paul II both as youth, prelate, and later as Archbishop of Cracow.

The first encounter with crude anti-Semitism takes place in a cafe in Wadowice, the Pope's birthplace. A drunken Polish policeman named Moljek rants about the oncoming Nazis:

"We beat the Germans in 1918. We beat the Russians in 1920. We did the work of ten, each of us did. We ate starving dogs -- more value to us than the Jews, I can tell you."

Karol Wojtyla, then a teen-ager, identifies strongly with his close Jewish friend and classmate, Theodor Krawich. In a subsequent

poignant scene, Karol and Theodor are picnicing in a meadow, and Theodor talks with pain about being taunted as "Jew Boy!" to another Polish youth who tore his coat. Karol, in a burst of anger, responds:

"It's ignorance! The exact opposite of what Christ taught. Feel sorry for him. He's ignorant."

Then Theodor says:

"I can't wait to leave this place...You've been like a brother to me, Lolek. I mean it."

Catholics, and other Christians, will be better able to understand the bestiality of the Nazis as Jews understand it -- perhaps even be helped to identify with and join in solidarity with Jews -- as a result of such brutal encounters with the Nazi Governor General of Poland, Hans Frank, who arrogantly proclaims to Archbishop Sapieha his plans for the fate of Poles and Jews:

"Poles, like Jews, are Untermenschen, subhumans. They have no right to life. But we intend to use some of them...the Slavs, not the Jews...as a work force of the German Reich...Every educated person will be regarded as an enemy and marked down for destruction. Jews will be done away with...We shall make the name of Poland a long-forgotten name on the ancient maps."

The most explicit -- and moving -- involvement of Karol Wojtyla in the fate of Jews takes place in two scenes. One is in a stone quarry where he comes to the defense of a Jewish laborer from Auschwitz and saves his life as a Nazi guard is about to beat him to death. The other portrays Wojtyla joining an underground Polish group that saves the lives of a Jewish family. There are several long dramatic scenes showing the future Pope handing out forged passports and leading the Teitlebaum family through Nazi guards to safety.

Capping the emphasis on Wojtyla's life under the Nazis is a scene where his girl friend complains that he does not have enough time for her. She says:

"Everyone knows what you're doing...taking Jewish families out of the ghettos, finding them places to hide. Is that what's keeping you away?"

That sensitivity to Jews, his opposition to anti-Semitism, continues into his later career. Toward the end of the film, Cardinal Wojtyla calls a meeting of the Curia, the bishops of Cracow, to discuss the struggle with the Polish Communist government. The cardinal asks his bishops to join him in supporting the students and academics in their struggle against the government. One of the bishops complains that many of the academics are Jews, therefore, why support them? Cardinal Wojtyla replies:

"The government uses that to deflect attention from the issues."

It should be made clear that this film is devoted overwhelmingly to the life and career of Pope John Paul II, and that his attitude towards Jews and anti-Semitism is a secondary, even tertiary theme. But precisely because this is a film made primarily for Christian audiences, and such a well-made and impactful story of heroic proportions, its strong positive references to this Pope's attitudes and behavior toward Jews can only be a derivative, but important benefit in affirming Catholic friendship for the Jewish people.

THE SY FISCHER COMPANY INC.

ONE EAST 57TH STREET • NEW YORK, N. Y. 10022 • 212-486-0426

October 31, 1983

Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum
165 East 56th Street
Room 502
New York, New York 10022

Dear Marc:

Enclosed find your tickets for the premiere benefit of POPE JOHN PAUL II for Wednesday, November 2, together with tickets for the post-performance dinner. You should plan on being at Avery Fisher Hall by 6:45 p.m.

I'm looking forward to seeing you on Wednesday evening.

Best regards.

Sincerely,



Alan R. Morris

Enc.

BY HAND



The American Jewish Committee

Institute of Human Relations • 165 East 56 Street, New York, N.Y. 10022 • 212/751-4000 • Cable Wishcom, N.Y.

September 20, 1983

His Eminence
William Cardinal Baum
Secretary for Commission for Non-Christians
Vatican City

My dear Cardinal Baum,

I sincerely hope that you have had a restful and pleasant summer.

My purpose in writing to you now is to seek your advice and assistance in regard to an important matter.

In recent days, I was invited to see a preview of a television film on the life of Pope John Paul II. It is a magnificent production, superbly acted, and dramatizes powerfully the humanism, spirituality, and moral courage of the Holy Father. It also contains some excellent passages on the Pope's attitudes and actions toward the Jewish people.

The program is scheduled to be shown over one of our major television networks, the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS-TV), in February 1984. The Archdiocese of New York feels so positively about the film that it is planning a major public showing of the film at Lincoln Center in November in support of Polish relief and refugee aid.

In light of the foregoing, I should like to explore with you the possibility of having the film shown before the Synod of Bishops when it meets in Rome during October. I am not sure to whom in the Curia this proposal should be addressed.

I would be grateful if you could bring this to the attention of the appropriate person(s) in the Vatican, or advise me whom to write to.

With warmest good wishes, I am,

Cordially,

Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum
National Director
Interreligious Affairs

MHT:RPR

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PER GLI

AFFARI PUBBLICI DELLA CHIESA

IL SEGRETARIO

VATICAN CITY, October 21, 1983

Dear Rabbi Tanenbaum,

I wish to thank you for your kind letter of September 20, which was delivered only on October 12.

I am aware that Monsignor Jorge Mejia has already been in touch with you on the matter you raised and has sent you the necessary information.

The Synod of Bishops will close at the end of this month, but in view of the fact that the Synod Fathers' agenda has been an extremely full one I think it would have been difficult to follow up your interesting proposal.

The Pontifical Commission for the Means of Social Communication will be able to assist you in finding an alternative solution.

With every good wish, I remain

Sincerely yours,

Rabbi MARC H. TANENBAUM
National Director, Interreligious Affairs
The American Jewish Committee
Institute of Human Relations
165 East 56th Street
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10022

+ *Achille Silvestrini*
(Achille Silvestrini)



The American Jewish Committee

Institute of Human Relations • 165 East 56 Street, New York, N.Y. 10022 • 212/751-4000 • Cable Wishcom, N.Y.

September 20, 1983

His Excellency
Archbishop Achille Silvestrini
Vatican Secretariat of State
Vatican City

My dear Archbishop Silvestrini,

I sincerely hope that you have had a restful and pleasant summer.

My purpose in writing to you now is to seek your advice and assistance in regard to an important matter.

In recent days, I was invited to see a preview of a television film on the life of Pope John Paul II. It is a magnificent production, superbly acted, and dramatizes powerfully the humanism, spirituality, and moral courage of the Holy Father. It also contains some excellent passages on the Pope's attitudes and actions toward the Jewish people.

The program is scheduled to be shown over one of our major television networks, the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS-TV), in February 1984. The Archdiocese of New York feels so positively about the film that it is planning a major public showing of the film at Lincoln Center in November in support of Polish relief and refugee aid.

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With warmest good wishes, I am,

Cordially,

Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum
National Director
Interreligious Affairs

MHT:RPR

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DAVID F. SQUIRE, Boston ■

September 20, 1983

Monsignor Jorge Mejia
Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity
Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews
Vatican City

My dear Jorge,

I sincerely hope that you have had a restful and pleasant summer.

My purpose in writing to you now is to seek your advice and assistance in regard to an important matter.

In recent days, I was invited to see a preview of a television film on the life of Pope John Paul II. It is a magnificent production, superbly acted, and dramatizes powerfully the humanism, spirituality, and moral courage of the Holy Father. It also contains some excellent passages on the Pope's attitudes and actions toward the Jewish people.

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I would be grateful if you could bring this to the attention of the appropriate person(s) in the Vatican, or advise me whom to write to.

With warmest good wishes, I am,

Cordially,

Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum
National Director
Interreligious Affairs

MHT:RPR

bcc: Allen Morris

SECRETARIAT FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN UNITY
COMMISSION FOR RELIGIOUS RELATIONS WITH THE JEWS

Vatican City - Tel. 698.4386/698.3071

Prot. N. 347/83/a

Vatican City, Oct 15, 1983

Rabbi Marc H. TANENBAUM
National Director, Interreligious Affairs
The American Jewish Committee
Institute of Human Relations
165 East 56th Street
NEW YORK, NY 10022, USA

Dear Marc,

Many thanks for your letter of September 20, arrived here the 29th, the day the Synod began. After that, I have been absent for some days for some business of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity.

The competent office for the question you raise is the Pontifical Commission for Social Communication, whose President is Archbishop Andrzej Maria Deskur. They are always very nice and cooperative.

However, my impression is that the time of the Synod is not very appropriate for the projection of a film; the bishops have such a heavy schedule, that it could end up by not getting all the attention it is worth of.

If you would like to try still, then you should bear in mind that the Synod is bound to finish around October 29. And I would advise to contact first (if you have not done it yet) Archbishop Laghi at the Apostolic Delegation in Washington DC.

We all here - Cardinal Willebrands, Fr Duprey and myself - have appreciated very much your concern and sympathy during the illness of the recently deceased Cardinal Cooke.

With best greetings and asking for you and your colleagues of the AJC the blessings of the Lord, I remain,

Yours, in friendship,


Jorge Mejia

Secretary to the Commission

THE SY FISCHER COMPANY INC.

ONE EAST 57TH STREET · NEW YORK, N. Y. 10022 · 212-486-0426

March 8, 1984

Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum
National Director,
Interreligious Affairs
The American Jewish Committee
Institute of Human Relations
165 East 56th Street
New York, New York 10022

Dear Marc:

I am enclosing a copy of a study guide that has been prepared by CBS in connection with the telecast of the POPE JOHN PAUL II film. I think they've really done a good job and I know they will be sending out approximately 200,000 of these. You may have additional ideas with respect to using these and I know CBS would be cooperative.

Best regards.

Sincerely,



Alan R. Morris

Enc.

BY HAND

A THREE-HOUR DRAMATIC SPECIAL
APRIL 22, 1984, 8 - 11 PM ET ON THE CBS TELEVISION NETWORK

POPE JOHN PAUL II



A VIEWERS' GUIDE BY CULTURAL INFORMATION SERVICE MADE POSSIBLE BY CBS ©

In a 1979 *Time* magazine cover story, Pope John Paul II was described as "the world's most impressive and natural leader." His energy, eloquence and personal warmth have impressed people around the globe. For 720 million Catholics, he is the source of light in matters of faith and morals. For others, the pontiff is a charismatic figure with clarity of vision and strength of character—two qualities sorely needed in a world wobbling on the brink of disaster.

How did Karol Wojtyla, "son of Poland," become the first non-Italian pope in 455 years? What experiences during his adolescence and young adulthood shaped his personality? When did he decide to become a priest? What forces in his private and public history forged his convictions? What can we learn from his life about the calling and challenges of religious leadership?

On April 22, the CBS Television Network will present "Pope John Paul II," a three-hour dramatic special. The script by Christopher Knopf answers many of these questions as it charts the life of Karol Wojtyla from his teenage years through his election as pope in 1978. Albert Finney makes his American television debut starring as Pope John Paul II. Michael Crompton stars as the younger Wojtyla. Emmy Award-winners Alvin Cooperman and Judith DePaul are the executive producers. Herbert Wise directs the film which was shot entirely on location in Rome and in and around Graz, Austria.

THE STORY

On September 29, 1978, Cardinal Karol Wojtyla of Cracow, Poland, hears the shocking news that Pope John Paul, leader of the Roman Catholic Church for only 33 days, has died. He prepares to leave for the conclave in Rome which will select a new pontiff.

The scene shifts to 1938. Karol, nicknamed "Lolek," lives in the small Polish town of Wadowice with his father, a widower and retired officer in the Polish army. Popular among his peers, Karol is a top high school student, an aspiring actor, and a sportsman. A devout Catholic, he serves regularly as an altar boy. At his graduation ceremonies, he gives the welcoming address for Archbishop Sapieha of Cracow, who is very impressed with this serious young man.

Although he has been asked to consider the priesthood, Karol decides to pursue his interest in acting. He moves with his father to Cracow and enrolls at Jagiellonian University to work toward a degree in Polish literature. All his plans are shattered when Nazi Germany invades Poland in September 1939. The university is closed, the professors arrested, and the students forced to work or face deportation. Karol finds a job at a quarry.

Vehemently opposed to the use of violence, Karol refuses to join the resistance movement against the German occupation. Instead, he is active in the Rhapsodic Theatre, a secret drama society which seeks to keep Polish culture alive. He becomes involved with a group helping Jewish families escape Nazi persecution. He also joins a Living Rosary Circle which meets weekly to discuss spiritual matters and pray.

Following the death of his father in 1941, Karol accepts God's call to become a priest. He attends an underground seminary run by Archbishop Sapieha. In 1946, shortly after the Russians drive the Germans out of Poland, Karol Wojtyla is ordained. He is sent to study in Rome.

Returning to Poland in 1948, the young priest meets with Sapieha, now a cardinal, and Stefan Wyszyński, bishop of Warsaw. They are concerned about the repressiveness of the

new Soviet-backed Polish government which has been arresting priests and has forbidden religious education in the schools. Recognizing Karol's gifts with young people, Sapieha sends his new priest to St. Florian Church in Cracow. It is work that Karol relishes.

Archbishop Wyszyński assumes the leadership of the church in Poland after Sapieha's death, and Karol learns that he is to be appointed bishop of Cracow. Although the two men disagree initially over methods, they agree on the need to resist attempts by the communist regime to infringe upon the rights of Polish Catholics.

In time Wojtyla develops into a politically astute negotiator. He helps workers at Nowa Huta obtain permission to build a church near the steelworks. Ten years pass before this project is completed. The money and materials must be provided by the believers, and the ruling powers oppose this symbol of the church's strength every step of the way. But in 1977, the church is dedicated by Cardinal Wojtyla before a crowd of 50,000.

In Rome on October 16, 1978, the conclave has voted. Karol Wojtyla, theologian, philosopher, author, sportsman, poet and theatre buff, is elected pope. He takes the name John Paul.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

In his book *Biography as Theology: How Life Stories Can Remake Today's Theology*, James William McClendon, Jr., outlines a methodology for finding in the lives of certain individuals an "ethics of character." This television drama can become an occasion for religious groups to study and discuss the life of Pope John Paul II in order to better understand the roots of his character and the significance of his ethical stands. At the same time, viewers will gain insights into some of the challenges facing religious people of all faiths in the past and in our own times. The

THE BULLETIN INSERT

The back page of this Viewers' Guide has been specially designed as a proof from which you can reproduce a standard two-sided 8½" x 5½" bulletin insert. The page can easily be duplicated by a photocopier, mimeograph or offset printer.

This insert can be used in a variety of ways: (1) distribute with the bulletin during religious services, (2) mail with newsletters or send home with students, (3) use as a supplementary text in parish education classes or school programs, (4) distribute at community meetings, (5) post on parish, school or other bulletin boards, and (6) hand out during hospital calls and visits to nursing homes.

following discussion starters are designed with these objectives in mind.

1. During the Nazi occupation of Poland, Karol helps Jewish families escape by providing them with false passports and safe passage. What character qualities are revealed by these activities?

2. What incidents in the film reveal Karol's opposition to the use of violence to effect change? What would you say to someone who believes that in certain cases violence is both moral and commendable?

3. Wojtyla and Wyszyński disagree about the best way to defend Polish human rights against communist oppression. Explain their positions as revealed in the drama and then discuss what role religious organizations should play in the defense of human rights in Poland today and in other countries around the world.

4. At the dedication of the church at Nowa Huta, Cardinal Wojtyla preaches: "This city of Nowa Huta was built as a city without God. But the will of God and the workers here will prevail. Let us take the lesson to heart. This is not merely a building. These are living stones." What does he mean? How do you assess his political skills during his clash with the communist authorities? What do you learn about the nature of the Polish church from watching the story of Nowa Huta unfold?

5. In a crucial scene in the film, Cardinal Wyszyński, realizing that Cardinal Wojtyla is likely to be elected pope in the next meeting of the conclave, says to him: "As Holy Father, all positions must be embraced. Can you do that? Can you embrace all the factions in the church?" Do you think it is important for religious leaders to embrace all factions? How well, in your estimation, has Pope John Paul II met this challenge?

6. In his acceptance speech, Pope John Paul II states: "I come from a church which has suffered much for the faith and I have been part of that suffering." What strengths has he gained from adversity?



PROJECTS

Religious education classes, church and synagogue study circles, youth groups, retreat centers and others may want to plan special programs in conjunction with the broadcast of "Pope John Paul II." Libraries might set up a display of books on his life supplemented with materials on other religious leaders. Here are a few project suggestions:

1. Karol Wojtyla's first doctoral thesis discussed "The Doctrine of Faith in St. John of the Cross." In the drama, Jan Tyrzanowski, the leader of his Living Rosary Circle, encourages Karol to read this Spanish mystic. Study the writings of St. John of the Cross and discuss their relevance to your understanding of the Christian faith.

2. Choosing a new pope is a complicated and often very political process as demonstrated in this drama. Have a member of your group present a report on the procedure. Pay special attention to the factors which helped Karol Wojtyla win the approval of the conclave. Books by Andrew Greeley and Peter Hebblethwaite cover the subject.

3. Pope John Paul II has written more than 120 articles, two books, a book-length radio play and many poems. An interesting tie-in with this television program would be to excerpt examples of his writings in parish bulletins and newsletters. You might also make banners using key quotations.

4. Pope John Paul II has stated repeatedly that clergy should be outspoken on human rights issues but not to the point of partisanship. His involvement in Polish human rights struggles in this story raises the important issue of the value of social ministry. How do you evaluate your church or synagogue's social ministry program? Do you feel it is effective? Do you think you should do more in this area? Why or why not?

5. Organize a series of lectures about religious leaders—past and present—from different faiths. Include information on their early lives, their role in the history of religion, and their contributions to humankind.

RESOURCES

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Murphy, Francis X. *The Papacy Today*. New York: Macmillan, 1981.

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Nichols, Peter. *The Pope's Divisions: The Roman Catholic Church Today*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1981.

Oram, James. *The People's Pope: The Story of Karol Wojtyla of Poland*. San Francisco: Chronicle, 1980.

Walsh, John. *An Illustrated History of the Popes: Saint Peter to John Paul II*. New York: St. Martin's, 1980.

Whale, John and Hebblethwaite, Peter. *The Man Who Leads the Church: An Assessment of Pope John Paul II*. New York: Harper & Row, 1980.

Williams, George H. *The Mind of Pope John Paul II: Origins of His Thought and Action*. New York: Seabury, 1981.

*Out of print but available in libraries.



POPE JOHN PAUL II

A THREE-HOUR DRAMATIC SPECIAL

APRIL 22, 1984, 8 - 11 PM ET

ON THE CBS TELEVISION NETWORK

On April 22, the CBS Television Network will present "Pope John Paul II" starring Albert Finney. The drama covers the life of Karol Wojtyla from his teenage years in a small town in Poland to his election as pope in 1978.

Many aspects of John Paul's character are revealed in this moving story. In high school, he is a top student, athlete, aspiring actor and devout altar boy. In Cracow during the Nazi occupation of Poland, he is a dedicated patriot striving to keep Polish tradition alive through an underground theatre. At

great personal risk, he helps save the lives of Jewish families who are fleeing Nazi persecution.

Karol Wojtyla's seminary classes are held in secret out of sight of the Gestapo. After he is ordained, a new threat to Catholic freedom in Poland emerges. In his parish work with young people and his efforts later on behalf of the steel workers of Nowa Huta, Wojtyla must use his strength, his courage, his skills in negotiation—and above all, his faith—to confront the repression of Poland's communist regime.



QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What is the most interesting and revealing aspect of Karol Wojtyla's life presented in this television drama?

2. What special qualities does Wojtyla possess which help him communicate so well with youth?

3. When he is appointed bishop, Karol expresses his concern that he will become isolated from the people at the parish level. How does he maintain contact with ordinary people during the following years? Why is Pope John Paul II often called "the people's pope"?

4. What do you learn from this television drama about the role the Catholic Church has played in Polish history?

5. Wojtyla disagrees with Archbishop Wyszynski about the best way to oppose communist oppression in Poland. Do you believe the church should become involved in politics?

6. Cardinal Wojtyla asserts that unbelief and atheism are the major issues which must be addressed in our time. Do you agree? What other challenges must religious groups face in the 1980s?

7. Discuss the significance of prayer as revealed in the film. What spiritual disciplines do you follow to give depth to your life?



TABLE TALK

Pope John Paul II has proved to be a defender of freedom and an opponent of totalitarianism. This ethical stand was apparent even in adolescence. The following quotation is taken from Karol's welcoming address to Cardinal Sapieha, which is depicted in the television drama. It would make a good discussion starter for a mealtime conversation with your family. How do you define freedom?

"Freedom is not only a moment. It is a condition of happiness. It forms the roots of man's becoming good or bad by his actions. To deprive a man of his freedom is to endanger his happiness. Freedom becomes the root of human morality."

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