

True Choice



Image from the film *"Mary's Land"* by Juan Manuel Cotelo.

4

"I am the gate. Whoever enters through me will be saved..."

Jn 10:9

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Juan Manuel Coteló Onate (Madrid, 1966) is an actor, director, screenwriter and film producer. He has worked with influential figures in the world of television, including Globomedia, with whom he collaborates.



“After passing through 8 universities, 2 as a student and 6 as a professor, I already know what my favorite school is: life itself. There is no better school of formation for writing, directing and acting – and that’s what I do, I tell stories. And it’s free!”

After spending 20 years in the world of film production, his name became associated with religious films after his successful documentary *“La última cima”* (2010), which is about the life of Fr. Pablo Domínguez, whom he got to meet prior to his death.

He is the founder and director of the audiovisual production company **INFINITO MÁS UNO**, responsible for the feature documentary *LA ÚLTIMA CIMA*, from the series

TE PUEDE PASAR A TI, for the Christmas carol CD

A TI NIÑO and for the feature film

MARY’S LAND, released in 2013.

The film *Mary’s Land* recounts the following story:

God, being in Paradise and having created an endless amount of beautiful and harmonious creatures that obey his laws without straying, desired to create a creature like Himself, who had the possibility not just to be harmonious and beautiful, but also to love. In this way, he could enjoy a happiness similar to the very same one that God enjoyed, but was unable to share with any other creature.

And so He created his masterpiece: the human being, a creature capable of the greatest beauty, having been endowed with the capacity to love. And God knew that love, beyond greater beauty, also entailed the greatest happiness possible for a creature – there was none greater.



Still from the film



The question of loving entailed something as yet unheard of in Paradise: endowing this creature with freedom, that is to say, with the possibility of deciding for himself whether to live according to the laws or whether to take an independent path contrary to that which had already been created; in a word, accepting the will of his Creator, or following his own will.

This came with a risk. It was possible that this new being would not choose what was good and opportune, but rather what was evil and unsuitable for himself and for the other creatures. But it was not very probable. God had endowed him with his very own qualities: a heart that would always serve as his compass, feelings in accordance with his actions, and an intelligence capable of determining the logic and meaning of his steps.

Imagine the surprise when this being, because of circumstances that are beyond the point at this moment, started to not choose the good. His steps began to lead him away from his source, and he kept on going, despite his own suffering and lack of meaning.

Man's heart became hardened and he lost his good sense. The two compasses that God had given him were no longer useful. He became completely lost.

With patience and affection, trusting in the innate goodness and intelligence of his creature, God decided to have faith and trust, and help man restart on the path that He had initially designed. He waited and waited, trusted and trusted. But each time man would go further and further away from the good acts necessary to be able to share in divine being and happiness.



Still from the film

God's angels grew tired of waiting, trusting, helping and interceding for so long. They met, armed with valor, and decided to send a representative to speak with God:

- "Lord, this creature of yours is lost. The human race has not desired to listen to you and their situation is no longer sustainable. Men have no good will, they are lazy, gluttonous, slaves to their instincts, liars, vain, self-centered, impatient. They don't only make themselves suffer, but they have believed themselves to be the masters of life, killing each other. They have lost their faith, live without hope, and there is no possible way they can get them back. We won't ask you to destroy them for their evil works, but...take away their freedom!"

-"Lord, this being is not prepared to be free. He is unable to make good use of the greatness that you have endowed him with."

The Lord became sad and, with tears in his eyes, responded:

-"NO!...The birds and the mountains already obey me, as do the fish and the breeze, the seas and the wild beasts."

-“This is not what I desire for this beloved creature. I will not force him to obey. The human being will remain endowed with the capacity to decide for himself. He must decide whether to obey me or not. He will remain distinguished from the rest of creation, for in his hands and in his heart I leave the possibility of the loftiest greatness and the greatest degradation, as well.”

So the angels left him and never again asked God about the freedom of men, for they understood that what God desired was not another creature to obey him, but so much more: He desired a creature that would love him.



Still from the film

1 After carefully reading the text above, answer the following questions:



1. Why did God create human beings? What for?

2. What made them similar to God?

True Choice

4

3. What characteristics do human beings have in common with the rest of the creatures? What sets them apart?

4. Something unheard of happens in Paradise. A creature endowed with freedom. How is this freedom defined?

5. The text speaks of two compasses that God gave to man. What are they?

6. When the angels denounce the conduct of men to God, why doesn't God take freedom away from the human beings?

2 Now it's time for YOU to be the protagonist.

7. Why did God create you? What for?

8. Think about how God made you like Him not just in your harmony and your beauty, but also in your capacity to love. Are you aware of how you are made?

4

True Choice

9. Do you believe that freedom is something that has been given to you, or is it something that you have merited for yourself?

10. Do you recognize the compasses that God has given you in your own life? Do you know how to use them?

11. The angels understood why God doesn't take away your freedom. Do you understand why?

12. What would your life be like if God listened to the angels and took your freedom away?

13. When he created you, God didn't want just another creature to obey him; he wanted much more. What did he want?

14. After making this story your own, what do you think is true freedom? What is true choice?

3 Let's end this session by reading a poem that expresses the choice of a creature endowed with humanity and freedom.



Rudyard Kipling, 1865.
 Writer and Poet
 Author of *The Jungle Book*.



IF...

If you can keep your head when all about you
 Are losing theirs and blaming it on you,
 If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,
 But make allowance for their doubting too;
 If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,
 Or being lied about, don't deal in lies,
 Or being hated, don't give way to hating,
 And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise:
 If you can dream—and not make dreams your master;
 If you can think—and not make thoughts your aim;
 If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster
 And treat those two impostors just the same;
 If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken
 Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,
 Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,
 And stoop and build 'em up with worn-out tools:
 If you can make one heap of all your winnings
 And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,
 And lose, and start again at your beginnings
 And never breathe a word about your loss;
 If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew
 To serve your turn long after they are gone,
 And so hold on when there is nothing in you
 Except the Will which says to them: 'Hold on!'
 If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,
 Or walk with Kings—nor lose the common touch,
 If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,
 If all men count with you, but none too much;
 If you can fill the unforgiving minute
 With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,
 Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,
 And—which is more—you'll be a Man, my son!

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True Choice

4 The poet talks about INTEGRITY.

How can you define the integrity of a person?

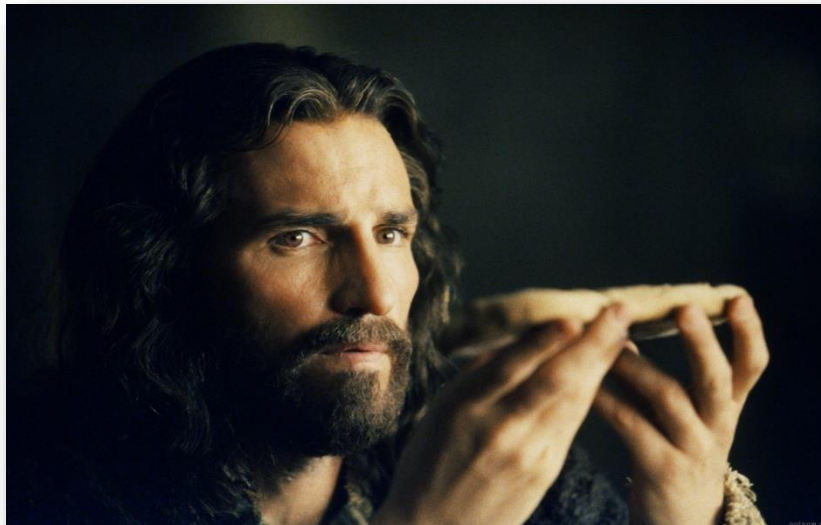
"To be an integral person, I..."

Choose some of the characteristics listed in the poem.

Do you think that integrity in life is related to authenticity and truth?

Upon reflection, we realize that being integral beings and living our lives in truth leads us to greater freedom.

We haven't discovered anything new: quite a while ago someone gave us clues about authentic freedom and true choice.



Still from "The Passion of the Christ", directed by Mel Gibson.

Jesus came to remind us what, in reality, we already knew from the Beginning: that only in God and in harmony with his will do we find authentic freedom and happiness. There is no other way. There is no better choice than to follow Him for whom we have been created.

He himself said:

"If you remain in my word, you will truly be my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (Jn 8:32)

And again they asked him which was the Way and He responded: *"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me"* (Jn 14:6)

Let us decide, then, to put our mind and heart in Him to whom we can securely entrust ourselves, since He already knows the way. Let us decide to choose Christ, who is Truth, Donation and GIFT OF SELF.



God placed the desire for happiness in my heart so that, exercising my right to freedom, I might direct my steps toward Him.

Freedom attains its perfection when it is directed and ordered toward God.

To love and feel loved, and to accept myself, are necessary conditions for me to exercise my freedom as well as possible.

The human body, my body, also allows me to understand human freedom. Only through my body is true freedom possible.

There is a call that God has inscribed in my body, and my freedom is always a response to his voice.

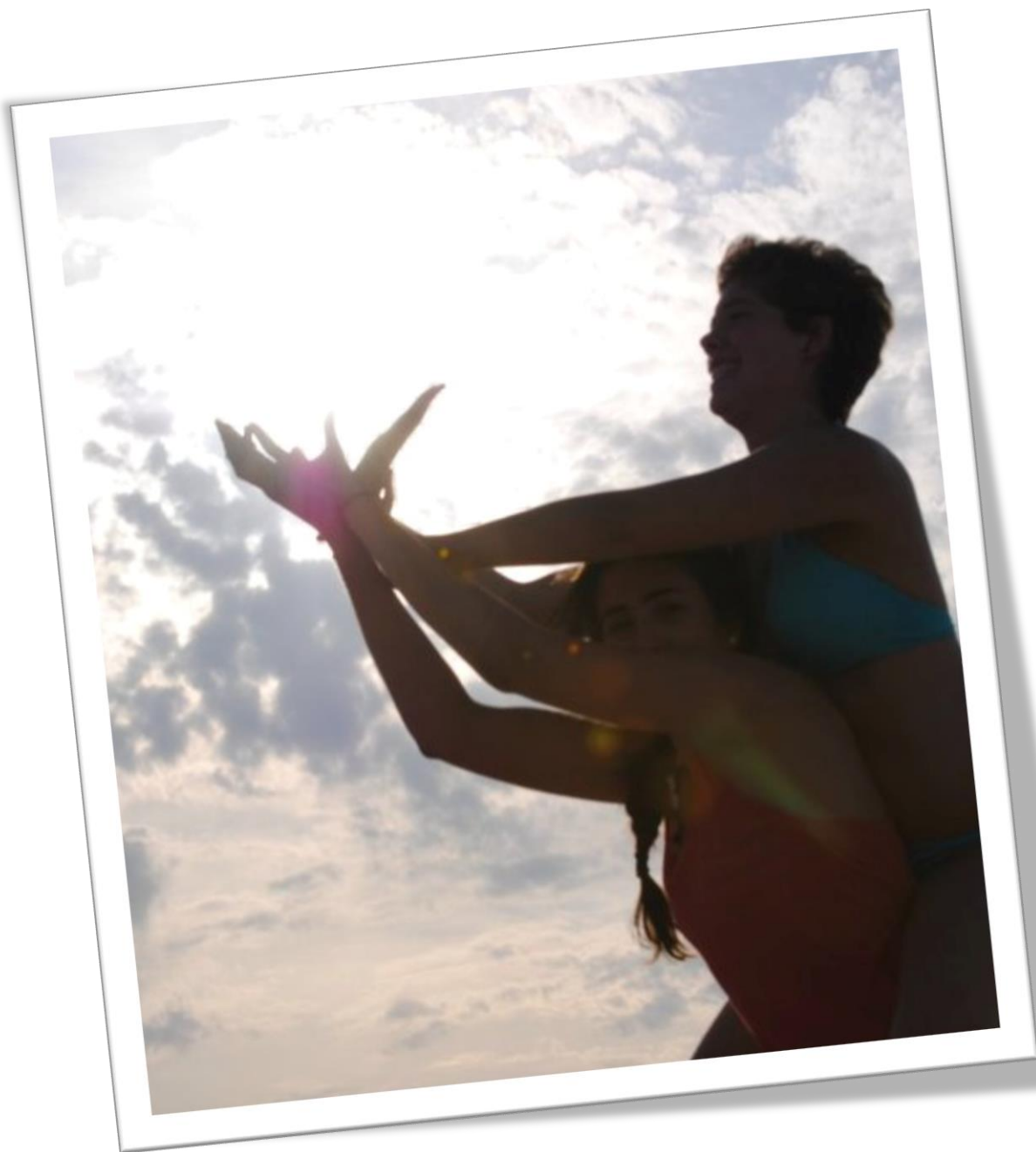
To be free is to be able to receive my life as a gift from the Father and to respond to Him with gratitude and love.

True choice is following the way of the TRUTH, incarnate in JESUS CHRIST.

My true freedom, my true choice is to go out of myself, to give myself to others, fully responding to my VOCATION TO LOVE.

3 I BRING MY FREEDOM INTO PLAY

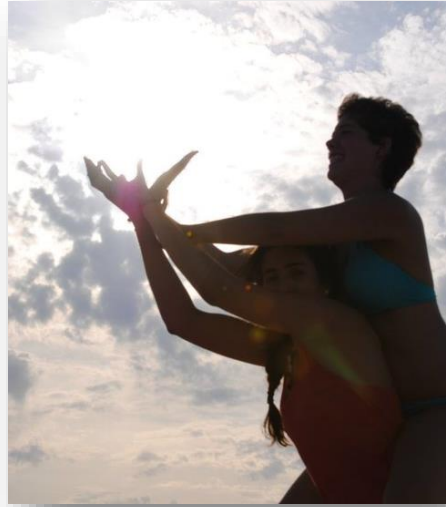
BUILDING UP LOVE



3 I BRING MY FREEDOM INTO PLAY



What should I take
in my backpack?



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