

Religious Freedom Week

June 22, 2018

Pray

Sts. Thomas More and John Fisher,
for the protection of religious freedom in America and
around the world.

Reflect

On this feast of Sts. Thomas More and John Fisher, we remember these saints who were martyred in 1535 for standing up for the sanctity of marriage and the freedom of the Church in opposition to England's King Henry VIII. In our country today, the Church faces challenges to her freedom to serve in healthcare, child welfare services, and education. While we seek to be faithful to Christ by serving our neighbors, ignoring conscience cannot be the condition placed on people of faith for service in the public square. Sts. Thomas More and John Fisher show us what faithful service looks like. They loved and served their country. Yet they rightly recognized that they were being forced to choose between the Church and the king. They were faithful to the Church. May their example continue to illuminate the path for us, as we seek to faithfully serve our Church and country.

Act

What do conscience and religious freedom mean to you? Share with us on Twitter using the hashtag #ReligiousFreedomWeek.



**Serving Others
in God's Love**
Religious Freedom Week
June 22–29, 2018

Office of Religious Liberty
www.usccb.org/freedom
Twitter: @USCCBFreedom
Text "Freedom" to 377377



Religious Freedom Week

June 23, 2018

Pray

For children waiting to be placed in a loving home,
for the caregivers who selflessly serve those children;
that they will find strength & support from the Church.

Reflect

The opioid crisis is putting a strain on the foster care system. Yet while more children are waiting to be placed in families, faith-based child welfare providers are being targeted for closures because of their religious convictions. Catholic Charities in Illinois provided these services. They excelled at recruiting families to serve as foster parents because they could go directly into churches and invite Catholics to serve in this way. The number of children in need is going up. The number of families willing to take the children into their homes is going down. And in places like Illinois, Massachusetts, California, and D.C., the service providers who have a track record of excellence in recruiting and assisting foster families are being shut down. Intolerance for religious views has real consequences, and in this case, it is vulnerable children who have suffered. Let's pray and act to keep kids first.

Act

The federal Child Welfare Provider Inclusion Act (H.R. 1881 / S. 811) would protect the religious liberty of child welfare service providers, including adoption and foster care agencies. Similar legislation has been introduced and passed in several states. Contact your U.S. senators and representatives and ask them to cosponsor the federal Child Welfare Provider Inclusion Act. Check out the [USCCB Action Alert Center](#) and your state Catholic conference or diocesan website for legislative updates!



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Religious Freedom Week

June 24, 2018

Pray

That the Holy Spirit would give us the courage to bear witness to the truth of the gospel, even in the face of social and legal pressure.

Reflect

All baptized Christians are called to share the joy of the gospel with others. When most of our co-workers, neighbors, and even family members don't share our faith and perhaps do not practice any faith at all, we might be timid or afraid to talk about our faith. But in a culture filled with so much junk, people are hungry for solid food. When we encounter Jesus Christ, we come to know the bread of life, the truth in which the restless hearts of our age can rest. We love our neighbors by helping them to encounter Jesus.

Act

As the Pope Francis teaches, "The Holy Spirit also grants the courage to proclaim the newness of the Gospel with boldness (*parrhesía*) in every time and place, even when it meets with opposition" (*Evangelii gaudium*, 259). Let's take this week to exercise our freedom by sharing our faith in Jesus Christ or to talk about religious freedom with others. Try it today!



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Religious Freedom Week

June 25, 2018

Pray

For our sisters and brothers in the Middle East; that through the intercession of the Apostles, who established these most ancient churches, Christians and all religious minorities would be freed from violent persecution.

Reflect

In July 2015, Pope Francis said, "Today we are dismayed to see how in the Middle East and elsewhere in the world many of our brothers and sisters are persecuted, tortured and killed for their faith in Jesus.... [I]n this third world war, waged piecemeal, which we are now experiencing, a form of genocide – I insist on the word – is taking place, and it must end." Today, Christians are among those religious minorities confronted with persecution, despite their having been critical to the vitality and pluralism of the region since the earliest days of Christianity.

Act

The Church in the United States stands in solidarity with Christians in the Middle East. Consider joining efforts to support Middle East Christians with a donation to [the Knights of Columbus](#), [Aid to the Church in Need](#), [Catholic Relief Services](#), or [Catholic Near East Welfare Association](#).



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Religious Freedom Week

June 26, 2018

Pray

That the Lord would protect all migrants and refugees, and that all those who work with people on the move would be free to serve.

Reflect

The Church has long sought to serve the unique needs of “people on the move,” from providing for basic needs, to assisting with resettlement, to offering legal services to help newcomers navigate the system of their host country. The Church provides exceptional service in this area and plays an indispensable role in our nation’s immigration and refugee resettlement system. In recent years, Christian services have faced legal attacks, because the Church refuses to facilitate abortions for the children who come under our care. Groups like the ACLU set up a perverse dilemma, trying to force the Church to choose between unborn children and migrant children. By defending religious freedom, we are saying that we refuse to make such a choice.

Act

The USCCB's Justice for Immigrants Campaign is an effort to unite and mobilize a growing network of Catholic entities and people of goodwill in support of immigration reform. Get news, resources, and action alerts from Justice for Immigrants at justiceforimmigrants.org.



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Religious Freedom Week

June 27, 2018

Pray

That nurses, doctors, therapists, and all ministers of healing would be strengthened by the Holy Spirit in their imitation of Christ's compassion and care for the sick.

Reflect

Acts of healing were central to the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ. Christians have over centuries developed healthcare ministries dedicated to the study and practice of medicine. Indeed, the Church invented the hospital as we know it. Today, orders like the Little Sisters of the Poor serve elderly low-income Americans of all backgrounds, yet the Little Sisters' work is at risk because of lawsuits brought by the states of California and Pennsylvania against the expanded religious and moral exemption to the HHS mandate. In New York, Catholic medical professionals - [like nurse Cathy DeCarlo](#) - have been forced to violate their consciences and participate in abortions. It is unthinkable that we would undermine our mission to heal by destroying innocent life and harming the persons for whom we are called to care.

Act

Human Life Action advocates for pro-life and conscience protection legislation. [Sign up to receive action alerts from Human Life Action today](#). Already contacted your representatives in Congress to support conscience protection? Consider [writing a short letter to the editor of your local newspaper](#), urging support for conscience protection for medical professionals.



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Religious Freedom Week

June 28, 2018

Pray

That Catholic schools would have freedom to teach and bear witness to the truth about God and God's creation.

Reflect

Education is a central aspect of the Church's mission. One of the Spiritual Works of Mercy is to teach. In the U.S., Catholic schools have played an important role in offering hope in impoverished, primarily urban, areas. Catholic schools have been significant anchor institutions in many neighborhoods, and thus they benefit even those who are not their students. Catholic leaders played a leading role in ensuring that African-American children could have access to quality education. Education is what Catholics do, and it is difficult to imagine an America without Catholic schools. Catholic schools need the space - the freedom - to operate in accordance with Catholic convictions if they are to continue to be a source of vitality for our society.

Act

Schools that operate in accordance with Church teaching about marriage as the life-long union between one man and one woman face significant pressure to change their policies. When Solicitor General Donald Verrilli argued before the Supreme Court in favor of marriage redefinition, he acknowledged that religious institutions, including schools, could lose their tax-exempt status. The First Amendment Defense Act (FADA) is a direct response to this threat. FADA would protect the tax-exempt status of non-profit entities, including schools. [Urge Congress to support FADA today!](#)



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Religious Freedom Week

June 29, 2018

Pray

That we would work to build a culture that recognizes and respects the dignity of all people.

Reflect

Religious freedom is for everyone. Religious freedom is rooted in human nature, and therefore it is a fundamental human right. When we speak up for religious freedom, we do so not only for ourselves, but because we are called to defend the dignity of every individual and community that seeks the truth about God, including Muslims, Jews, and others who do not share our Catholic Christian faith.

Act

Religious freedom is about preserving space to worship and serve. Celebrate religious freedom by gathering with friends and parishioners to discuss how your parish community can serve others. Need ideas? Check out the [Find a Service Opportunity page at WeAreSaltandLight.org](#).



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