

# Religious Freedom

## Ecumenical Prayer Service Outline

### Opening Hymn

*To be selected from the local hymnal*

### Welcome by church leaders

### Scripture Reading(s)

*Suggested Passages:*

#### **OLD TESTAMENT**

*“Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Let my people go, that they may celebrate a feast to me in the desert.” Pharaoh answered, “Who is the LORD, that I should heed his plea to let Israel go?” (Ex 5:1-2)*

*Pharaoh then summoned Moses and Aaron and said, “Go and worship the LORD. Your little ones, too, may go with you. But your flocks and herds must remain.” Moses replied, “You must also grant us sacrifices and holocausts to offer up to the LORD, our God. Hence, our livestock also must go with us. Not an animal must be left behind. Some of them we must sacrifice to the LORD, our God.” (Ex 10:24-26)*

*“They shall take some of its blood and apply it to the two doorposts and the lintel of every house in which they partake of the lamb.” (Ex 12:7)*

*“For remember that you too were once slaves in the land of Egypt, and the LORD, your God, ransomed you. That is why I am giving you this command today.” (Dt 15:15)*

*“You come against me with sword and spear and scimitar, but I come against you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel” (1 Sm 17:45)*

*The horse is equipped for the day of battle, but victory is the LORD’s. (Pv 21:31)*

#### **NEW TESTAMENT**

*But Peter and the apostles said in reply, “We must obey God rather than men.” (Acts 5:29)*

*How can we who died to sin yet live in it? .... For a dead person has been absolved from sin. If, then, we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him. (Rom 6: 2, 7-8)*

*Consequently, you too must think of yourselves as being dead to sin and living for God in Christ Jesus. Therefore, sin must not reign over your mortal bodies so that you obey their desires. (Rom 6:11-12)*

*But what profit did you get then from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now that you have been freed from sin and have become slaves of God, the benefit that you have leads to sanctification, and its end is eternal life. (Rom 6:21-22)*

*So, then, I discover the principle that when I want to do right, evil is at hand. For I take delight in the law of God, in my inner self, but I see in my members another principle at war with the law of my mind, taking me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. Miserable one that I am! Who will deliver me from this mortal body? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Rom 7:21-25)*

*For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you received a spirit of adoption, through which we cry, "Abba, Father!" (Rom 8:15)*

*We endure everything so as not to place an obstacle to the gospel of Christ. (1 Cor 9:12)*

*No one should seek his own advantage, but that of his neighbor. (1 Cor 10:24)*

*For why should my freedom be determined by someone else's conscience? (1 Cor 10:29)*

*Whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God. (1 Cor 10:31)*

*Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. (2 Cor 3:17)*

*Then after fourteen years I again went up to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along also. I went up in accord with a revelation, and I presented to them the gospel that I preach to the Gentiles—but privately to those of repute—so that I might not be running, or have run, in vain. Moreover, not even Titus, who was with me, although he was a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised, but because of the false brothers secretly brought in, who slipped in to spy on our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus, that they might enslave us—to them we did not submit even for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might remain intact for you. (Gal 2:1-5)*

*I mean that as long as the heir is not of age, he is no different from a slave, although he is the owner of everything, but he is under the supervision of guardians and administrators until the date set by his father. In the same way we also, when we were not of age, were enslaved to the elemental powers of the world. But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to ransom those under the law, so that we might receive adoption. As proof that you are children, God sent the spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!" So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God. At a time when you did not know God, you became slaves to things that by nature are not gods; but now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and destitute elemental powers? Do you want to be slaves to them all over again? You are observing days, months, seasons, and years. I am afraid on your account that perhaps I have labored for you in vain. (Gal 4:1-11)*

*For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and the other by the freeborn woman. The son of the slave woman was born naturally, the son of the freeborn through a promise. ... Therefore, brothers, we are children not of the slave woman but of the freeborn woman. For freedom Christ set us free; so stand firm and do not submit again to the yoke of slavery. (Gal 4:22-23, 31—5:1)*

*For you were called for freedom, brothers. But do not use this freedom as an opportunity for the flesh; rather, serve one another through love. For the whole law is fulfilled in one statement, namely, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." (Gal 5:13-14)*

*Know this, my dear brothers: everyone should be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath, for the wrath of a man does not accomplish the righteousness of God. Therefore, put away all filth and evil excess and humbly welcome the word that has been planted in you and is able to save your souls. Be doers of the word and not hearers only, deluding yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his own face in a mirror. He sees himself, then goes off and promptly forgets what he looked like. But the one who peers into the perfect law of freedom and perseveres, and is not a hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, such a one shall be blessed in what he does. (Jas 1:22-25)*

*Be free, yet without using freedom as a pretext for evil, but as slaves of God. Give honor to all, love the community, fear God, honor the king. (1 Pt 2:16-17)*

*Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow in his footsteps. "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth." When he was insulted, he returned no insult; when he suffered, he did not threaten; instead, he handed himself over to the one who judges justly. He himself bore our*

*sins in his body upon the cross, so that, free from sin, we might live for righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. For you had gone astray like sheep, but you have now returned to the shepherd and guardian of your souls. (1 Pt 2:21-25)*

## Sung Response

*A responsorial psalm from the local hymnal that incorporates one of these passages is suggested:*

*Blessed the man who follows not  
the counsel of the wicked,  
Nor walks in the way of sinners,  
nor sits in the company of the insolent,  
But delights in the law of the LORD  
and meditates on his law day and night. (Ps 1:1-2)*

*O LORD, I am your servant;  
I am your servant, the son of your handmaid;  
you have loosed my bonds.  
To you will I offer sacrifice of thanksgiving,  
and I will call upon the name of the LORD. (Ps 116:16-17)*

*So shall I have an answer for those who reproach me,  
for I trust in your words.  
Take not the word of truth from my mouth,  
for in your ordinances is my hope.  
And I will keep your law continually,  
forever and ever.  
And I will walk at liberty,  
because I seek your precepts.  
I will speak of your decrees before kings  
without being ashamed. (Ps 119:42-46)*

## Gospel

*Suggested Passages:*

*“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 8:31-32)*

*Jesus said to those Jews who believed in him, “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.” They answered him, “We are descendants of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How can you say, ‘You will become free’?” Jesus answered*

*them, “Amen, amen, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave of sin. A slave does not remain in a household forever, but a son always remains. So if the Son frees you, then you will truly be free.” (Jn 8:31-36)*

*Jesus answered him, “You would have no power over me if it had not been given to you from above. For this reason the one who handed me over to you has the greater sin.” (Jn 19:11)*

Homily/Reflections by church leaders

Apostles’ Creed

Prayers of Intercession for Religious Freedom

*For suggested intercessory prayers see attached document*

Sign of Peace

The Lord’s Prayer

Benediction/Sending Forth

Closing Hymn

*To be selected from the local hymnal*

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