

FORTNIGHT FOR FREEDOM

Join Our Novena for Religious Liberty

A novena is a traditional form of prayer which takes place over a period of nine days (the number of days which Mary and the Apostles spent in prayer between the Ascension and Pentecost).

To participate in this novena, spend some time during each of the nine days using the daily prayers, reflections, and the Daily Prayer printed below.

Daily Prayer For Religious Liberty

Almighty God, Father of all nations,
 For freedom you have set us free in Christ Jesus.
 We praise and bless you for the gift of religious liberty, the foundation of human rights, justice and the common good.
 Grant to our leaders the wisdom to protect and promote our liberties.
 By your grace may we have the courage to defend them for ourselves and for all those who live in this blessed land.
 We ask this through the intercession of Mary Immaculate, our patroness,
 And in the name of your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
 With whom you live and reign, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Novena for Religious Liberty • June 25

DAY ONE

Opening Prayer
Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and enkindle in us the fire of your love.

Today's Reflection

From well before Cardinal Gibbons [in the late 1800s], Catholics in America have been advocates for religious liberty, and the landmark teaching of the Second Vatican Council on religious liberty was influenced by the American experience.... We have been staunch defenders of religious liberty in the past. We have a solemn duty to discharge that duty today.... [W]e address an urgent summons to our fellow Catholics and fellow Americans to be on guard, for religious liberty is under attack both at home and abroad.

--From Our First, Most Cherished Liberty U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2012.

Novena Prayer
Pray the Daily Prayer for Religious Liberty.

Novena for Religious Liberty • June 26

DAY TWO

Opening Prayer
Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and enkindle in us the fire of your love.

Today's Reflection

Of particular concern are certain attempts being made to limit that most cherished of American freedoms, the freedom of religion. Many of you have pointed out that concerted efforts have been made to deny the right of conscientious objection on the part of Catholic individuals and institutions with regard to cooperation in intrinsically evil practices. Others have spoken to me of a worrying tendency to reduce religious freedom to mere freedom of worship without guarantees of respect for freedom of conscience.

--Pope Benedict XVI in an address to American bishops, Jan. 19, 2012.

Novena Prayer
Pray the Daily Prayer for Religious Liberty.

Novena for Religious Liberty • June 27

DAY THREE

Opening Prayer
Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and enkindle in us the fire of your love.

Today's Reflection

Religious liberty is not only about our ability to go to Mass on Sunday or pray the Rosary at home. It is about whether we can make our contribution to the common good of all Americans. Can we do the good works our faith calls us to do, without having to compromise that very same faith?... What is at stake is whether America will continue to have a free, creative and robust civil society--or whether the state alone will determine who gets to contribute to the common good, and how they get to do it.

From Our First, Most Cherished Liberty U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2012.

Novena Prayer
Pray the Daily Prayer for Religious Liberty.

Novena for Religious Liberty • June 28

DAY FOUR

Opening Prayer
Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and enkindle in us the fire of your love.

Today's Reflection

George Washington wrote that "the establishment of civil and religious liberty was the motive that induced me to the field of battle." Thomas Jefferson assured the Ursuline Sisters--who had been serving a mostly non-Catholic population by running a hospital, an orphanage, and schools in Louisiana since 1727--that the principles of the Constitution were a "sure guarantee" that their ministry would be free "to govern itself according to its own voluntary rules, without interference from the civil authority."

--From Our First, Most Cherished Liberty U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2012.

Novena Prayer
Pray the Daily Prayer for Religious Liberty.

Novena for Religious Liberty June 29

DAY FIVE

Opening Prayer
Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and enkindle in us the fire of your love.

Today's Reflection

The civil rights movement was an essentially religious movement, a call to awaken consciences... In his famous *Letter from Birmingham Jail* in 1963, Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. boldly said, "The goal of America is freedom.... I would agree with St. Augustine that 'an unjust law is no law at all.... How does one determine when a law is just or unjust? A just law is a man-made code that squares with the moral law or the law of God. An unjust law is a code that is out of harmony with the moral law."

--From Our First, Most Cherished Liberty U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2012.

Novena Prayer
Pray the Daily Prayer for Religious Liberty.

Novena for Religious Liberty • June 30

DAY SIX

Opening Prayer
Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and enkindle in us the fire of your love.

Today's Reflection

It is a sobering thing to contemplate our government enacting an unjust law. An unjust law cannot be obeyed. In the face of an unjust law, an accommodation is not to be sought, especially by resorting to equivocal words and deceptive practices. If we face today the prospect of unjust laws, then Catholics in America, in solidarity with our fellow citizens, must have the courage not to obey them. No American desires this. No Catholic welcomes it, but if it should fall upon us, we must discharge it as a duty of citizenship and an obligation of faith.

--From Our First, Most Cherished Liberty U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2012.

Novena Prayer
Pray the Daily Prayer for Religious Liberty.

Novena for Religious Liberty • July 1

DAY SEVEN

Opening Prayer

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and enkindle in us the fire of your love.

Today's Reflection

The human person has a right to religious freedom. This freedom means that all men are to be immune from coercion on the part of individuals or of social groups and of any human power, in such wise that in matters religious no one is to be forced to act in a manner contrary to his own beliefs.... This right of the human person to religious freedom is to be recognized in the constitutional law whereby society is governed. Thus it is to become a civil right.

--From the Second Vatican Council's Declaration on Religious Liberty, 1965.

Novena Prayer

Pray the Daily Prayer for Religious Liberty.

Novena for Religious Liberty • July 2

DAY EIGHT

Opening Prayer

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and enkindle in us the fire of your love.

Today's Reflection

We are sadly aware that religious liberty in many other parts of the world is in much greater peril. Our obligation at home is to defend religious liberty robustly, but we cannot overlook the much graver plight that religious believers, most of them Christian, face around the world.... If religious liberty is eroded here at home, American defense of religious liberty abroad is less credible.... Therefore it is our task to strengthen religious liberty at home...so that we might defend it more vigorously abroad.

--From Our First, Most Cherished Liberty U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2012.

Novena Prayer

Pray the Daily Prayer for Religious Liberty.

Novena for Religious Liberty • July 3

DAY NINE

Opening Prayer

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and enkindle in us the fire of your love.

Today's Reflection

What we ask is nothing more than that our God-given right to religious liberty be respected. We ask nothing less than that the Constitution and laws of the United States, which recognize that right, be respected. In insisting that our liberties as Americans be respected, we know as bishops that what our Holy Father said is true. This work belongs to an engaged, articulate, and well-formed Catholic laity endowed with a strong critical sense vis-a-vis the dominant culture."

--From Our First, Most Cherished Liberty U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2012.

Novena Prayer

Pray the Daily Prayer for Religious Liberty.

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Find out more about the Fortnight for Freedom on our website at www.waterloocatholics.org



FORTNIGHT FOR FREEDOM



What Is the "Fortnight for Freedom"?

The "Fortnight for Freedom" is a 14-day period of prayer, education and action in support of religious freedom initiated by the Catholic bishops of the United States. The bishops called for this period prayer, education and action in a statement titled *Our First, Most Cherished Liberty* issued earlier this spring.

This statement, written by the bishops' ad hoc Committee on Religious Liberty, outlined the bishops' concerns over threats to religious freedom both at home and abroad. It asked dioceses and parishes to choose dates during the Fortnight, June 21-July 4, for special events that would constitute "a great national campaign of teaching and witnessing for religious liberty."

"We need...to speak frankly with each other when our freedoms are threatened," the bishops wrote, and "how is such a time. As Catholic bishops and American citizens we address an urgent summons to our fellow Catholics and fellow Americans to be on guard, for religious liberty is under attack, both at home and abroad," the bishops wrote.

You can learn more about the Fortnight for Freedom online at: www.fortnightforfreedom.org.

The Most Cherished of American Freedoms

In 1634, a mix of Catholic and Protestant settlers arrived in Southern Maryland from England aboard the Ark and the Dove. They had come at the invitation of the Catholic Lord Baltimore, who had been granted the land by the Protestant King Charles I of England. While Catholics and Protestants were killing each other in Europe, Lord Baltimore imagined Maryland as a society where people of different faiths could live together peacefully. This vision was soon codified in Maryland's 1649 Act Concerning Religion (also called the "Toleration Act"), which was the first law in our nation's history to protect an individual's right to freedom of conscience.

Maryland's early history teaches us that, like any freedom, religious liberty requires constant vigilance and protection, or it will disappear. Maryland's experiment in religious toleration ended within a few decades. The colony was placed under royal control and the Church of England became the established religion. Discriminatory laws, including the loss of political rights, were enacted against those who refused to conform. Catholic chapels were closed and Catholics were restricted to practicing their faith in their homes. The Catholic community lived under this coercion until the American Revolution.

By the end of the 18th century our nation's founders embraced freedom of religion as an

essential condition of a free and democratic society. So when the Bill of Rights was ratified, religious freedom had the distinction of being the First Amendment. Religious liberty is indeed the first liberty.

This is our American heritage, our most cherished freedom. If we are not free in our conscience and our practice of religion, all other freedoms are fragile. If our obligations and duties to God are impeded, or even worse, contradicted by the government, then we can no longer claim to be a land of the free.

Is our most cherished freedom truly under threat? Among many current challenges, consider the recent Department of Health and Human Services mandate requiring almost all private health plans to cover contraception, sterilization and abortion-inducing drugs. For the first time in our history, the federal government will force religious institutions to facilitate drugs and procedures contrary to our moral teaching, and purport to define which religious institutions are "religious enough" to merit an exemption. This is not a matter of whether contraception may be prohibited by the government. It is not even a matter of whether contraception may be supported by the government. It is a matter of whether religious people and institutions may be forced by the government to provide coverage for contraception and sterilization, even when it violates our religious beliefs.

