

Freedom to serve migrants and refugees

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

Christians are committed to caring for the vulnerable, and migrants and refugees are some of the most vulnerable. 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. In recent years, new laws and regulations have been proposed that have the effect of restricting the Church’s ability to serve. Under one state law, even giving an undocumented person a ride to Mass could have been deemed a criminal offense. Furthermore, the new federal Administration has sought to drastically reduce the number of refugees admitted into the U.S., and has suspended the resettlement of refugees from countries where many people face violent persecution. The Church is called to serve the vulnerable, and we must remain steadfast in our commitment to solidarity with migrants and refugees

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.



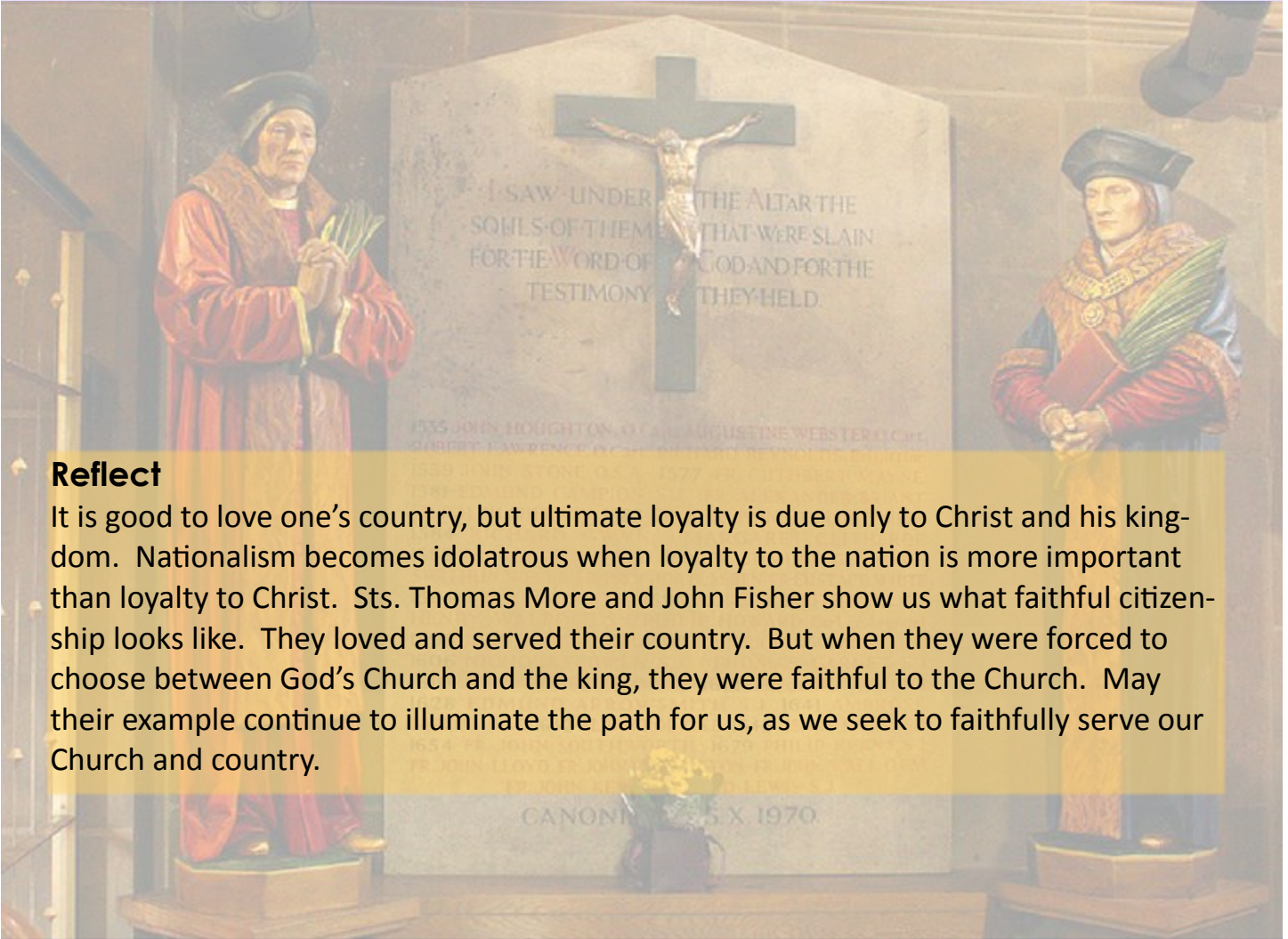
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May we be God's servants first

Pray

Sts. Thomas More and John Fisher,
pray that we would be servants of our country, but God's first.



Reflect

It is good to love one's country, but ultimate loyalty is due only to Christ and his kingdom. Nationalism becomes idolatrous when loyalty to the nation is more important than loyalty to Christ. Sts. Thomas More and John Fisher show us what faithful citizenship looks like. They loved and served their country. But when they were forced to choose between God's 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

Get together and celebrate religious freedom with a parish picnic or barbeque. Hand out religious freedom conversation starters as a way to spur discussion about our first, most precious liberty. Or, host a movie night, and watch *A Man for All Seasons*, about the martyrdom of St. Thomas More.



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Freedom to care for the sick



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. He restored sight to the blind, made the lame to walk, and cured leprosy. These miracles revealed that Jesus has come to restore the broken areas of this fallen world. The ministry of healing has continued in the Church. Christians have developed healthcare ministries dedicated to the study and practice of medicine. Indeed, the Church invented the hospital as we know it. Catholic hospitals today are often attacked for not performing abortions and other harmful procedures. Catholic medical professionals - [like nurse Cathy DeCarlo](#) - have been forced to violate their consciences and participate in abortions. Catholics serve in healing ministries out of fidelity to Jesus Christ. 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

Concerned Catholics can help by contacting their representatives in Congress and voicing support for conscience protection. Check out [Human Life Action](#) and the [USCCB Action Alert Center](#) for updates on bills like Conscience Protection Act (H.R. 644 / S. 301) and the No Taxpayer Funding for Abortion Act (H.R. 7 / S. 184).



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Freedom to bear witness to Truth

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

We must stand up for the civil right to be free from government coercion. At the same time, we Christians must be mindful that our freedom comes from Christ, and so we are always free when we remain in Christ. When a government attempts to force us to violate our consciences, we must witness to the truth. A state that coerces the conscience of its citizens radically oversteps its proper boundaries. Rather than resist as a revolutionary, the Christian bears patient witness to the truth, even if that witness leads to punishment. The martyrs are great examples of this. The key to martyrdom is witness to truth. In this respect, we are all called to be martyrs.

Act

Start speaking up today! [Reflect on how to respectfully engage in conversation about religious freedom](#). Share with others why religious freedom is good for all people.



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Freedom to serve God with our whole lives

Pray

That all Christians would have the courage to serve God with our whole lives and to live out our faith with boldness and compassion.

Reflect

Christians carry out the mission of the Church by doing simple acts of charity on a daily basis. A person might check in on his elderly neighbors, or another may show her co-workers in small ways that she truly cares about their well-being. All of us, from every walk of life, are to infuse our work and daily activities with Christian charity. Sometimes, our culture urges us to think of our faith as a strictly interior matter. The culture says that we are free to worship, or to be spiritual, but our faith should not be expressed publicly. A culture in which faith is never visible tends to be one that constricts religion. Christ calls us to a whole life of discipleship. We exercise our faith in all that we do.

Act

The life of faith begins with prayer. Hold a prayer vigil for religious freedom. Eucharistic adoration, the Rosary, and the Divine Mercy Chaplet can all be forms of intercession for our country and our first freedom. Another great way to pray for our country year-round is the Call to Prayer for Life, Marriage, and Religious Liberty. [Sign up today!](#)



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Freedom to seek the Truth

Pray

That the Spirit of Wisdom would illuminate our minds and open our hearts, as we seek to know the truth about God and to live in the fullness of that truth.

Reflect

Religious freedom is rooted in the nature of the human person. Human beings have a capacity to seek and hold fast to truth. A natural desire compels each one of us to reach out and grasp the truth about God. Creation itself bears witness to the reality of God, drawing us out, inviting us to listen for God's voice. And God speaks to us. Because God has created us for communion with Him, we have a corresponding duty. The right to religious freedom flows from this duty to seek the truth. Religious freedom means immunity from coercion, but its source and summit is the truth about God.

Act

Catholic teaching on religious freedom has much to offer our culture today. Take the time [to learn more about the richness of Catholic teaching on religious freedom](#). Consider getting a study group together to read and discuss what religious freedom is really all about.



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For Christians in the Middle East

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 piece-meal, 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

Catholic Relief Services, Aid to the Church in Need, Catholic Near East Welfare Association, and the Knights of Columbus have all worked to assist Christians in the Middle East. Consider getting in touch with these organizations and finding out how you can participate in their work.



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Freedom to serve through education

Pray

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

Reflect

God has created people with a capacity to exercise reason. The Christian commitment to reason and service has meant that 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

Consider getting in touch with your local Catholic schools to find out about how they serve their communities and how you might participate in their work. Or, [sign up for the USCCB Catholic Education Newsletter](#) to keep up with the latest in Catholic education.



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For the freedom of the Church



Pray

That the Church would have the space to carry out her mission of service and mercy for the whole world.

Reflect

The Church is the body of Christ, the pilgrim people of God. She is not simply another charitable organization. The Church is called to carry forward the mission of Jesus Christ in all times and places. Much current work for religious freedom asks for exemptions from the state. But we should keep in mind that the government is not granting us rights. Rather, the state is correctly acknowledging the right of the Church to fulfill her purposes. As Pope Francis, echoing Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, has said, the Church is not merely an “NGO” (non-governmental organization). The Church is empowered by the Holy Spirit to carry out the mission of Christ, and a well-functioning government will recognize its own limits and allow the Church the space to do her work.



Act

Our freedom for mission is difficult to appreciate if it is not exercised. Get in touch with a local parish or diocese, find out what your local church is doing in your community, and see how you can get involved. Even if you don't have time to volunteer, prayer can be an important way to stay connected to the work.



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Freedom to serve families & children awaiting adoption

Pray

For children awaiting adoptive parents,
for the caregivers who selflessly serve those children,
and for the families who are seeking to adopt;
that they will find strength & support from the Church.

Reflect

Catholic Charities in Boston excelled at finding families for difficult-to-place children. Catholic Charities sought to place children in homes where they would flourish, and so they placed children in homes with a married mother and father. After Massachusetts redefined marriage, Catholic Charities was given an impossible choice: do what you believe to be wrong for children or end your adoption services. They chose the latter. Intolerance from the state for religious views has real consequences, and in this case, it is vulnerable children who have suffered.

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. Check out the [USCCB Action Alert Center](#) and your state Catholic conference or diocesan website for legislative updates!



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Freedom to serve the vulnerable

Pray

That the Holy Spirit would give all Christians the courage and humility to serve Christ by serving the vulnerable.

Reflect

In St. Matthew's gospel, Jesus tells his followers that whatever we do for the least of these, we do for him. In other words, we serve Jesus when we serve others, especially the poor and vulnerable. Taking it a step further, if we treat the poor and vulnerable with callous disregard, then we are scorning Jesus. Over the course of two thousand years, the Church has set up charitable institutions, such as adoption services, hospitals, schools, refugee resettlement services, and more, in order to obey Christ's call to serve. We serve the world, not just as individuals, but as communities. Missionary discipleship is a communal activity, and it is often carried out in institutions. Religious freedom here in the U.S. is, at its core, about the space to carry out our ministries. We are called to serve others, and we work for religious freedom so that we may be able to serve others, especially through our ministries.

Act

All of us are called to follow Jesus Christ as missionary disciples. Consider taking a few minutes to pray and reflect on how God might be calling you to serve.



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Freedom to build stronger communities

Pray

That the Church and all religious institutions would have the freedom to contribute to the flourishing of our society.

Reflect

We hold our faith because it is true. At the same time, faith turns out to be good for society as a whole. When religious freedom is respected, religion itself flourishes, and society flourishes in turn. Recent research has even shown that religious institutions significantly boost the economy. Religious institutions employ many people, and their service to the poor helps to lift people out of poverty. As Catholics, we promote religious liberty so that we can have the space to serve and so that all have the freedom to seek the truth about God. When we work for religious freedom, we are working to promote the common good, the flourishing of all people in our country.

Act

How have religious groups helped you, your family, and your neighbors? Consider starting a conversation with your friends and neighbors about all the good that people of faith have done in your community. And we want to hear from you! Share your stories with us on Twitter at [@USCCBFreedom](https://twitter.com/USCCBFreedom).



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For our sisters and brothers in Mexico

Pray

That through the intercession of Our Lady of Guadalupe, all people in Mexico will have the freedom to live out their faith.

Reflect

In Mexico, religious freedom violations have risen recently, with some statistics indicating it continues to be a dangerous country for Catholic priests and lay leaders. Many religious freedom violations are linked to the Law of Uses and Customs, which stipulates that indigenous communities can retain their traditional form of government, allowing the religious majority in local communities to make life difficult for religious minorities. To further complicate the situation, some illegal cartels attempt to force religious institutions to become fronts for money laundering, and to challenge Church programs and teachings that offer alternatives to a life of violence. In 2016, three priests were murdered, and there was an increase in reported extortions, threats, and abductions of religious. The Bishops of Mexico issued a statement in February 2015, calling for all elements of government and civil society to combat corruption in all its forms. They have urged authorities to find comprehensive and inclusive solutions to the violence afflicting so many individuals and families.

Act

Religious freedom is a fundamental right, which should be recognized in all places. The USCCB Committee on International Justice and Peace (IJP) works to advance the social mission of the Church on international justice and peace through policy development, advocacy, education, and acts of ecclesial solidarity. Visit the [IJP home page](#), where you can learn more and sign up for newsletters and action alerts!



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May we promote a culture of freedom for all

Pray

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

Reflect

Religious freedom is for everyone. The Church teaches that religious freedom is rooted in the nature of the human person, 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

There are many organizations that work for religious freedom for *all* Americans. Consider signing up to receive newsletters from, and praying for, the efforts of these organizations.



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