



Fortnight for Freedom

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Freedom for Mission

June 21 – July 4



Quincena por la Libertad

2 0 1 7

Libertad para la Misión

21 de junio al 4 de julio

Fortnight for Freedom Talking Points

- In the statement, [*Our First, Most Cherished Liberty*](#) (April 2012), the USCCB's Ad Hoc Committee for Religious Liberty announced the first Fortnight for Freedom – a call to fourteen days of prayer, education, and action for religious freedom in the United States and abroad.
- The theme of this year's Fortnight is ***Freedom for Mission***. The theme seeks to complement the USCCB-hosted Convocation of Catholic Leaders, which includes a focus on missionary discipleship and will take place in Orlando from July 1 to July 4.
- The Fortnight for Freedom will again take place from June 21 to July 4. This two-week period is a time when our liturgical calendar celebrates a series of great martyrs who remained faithful in the face of persecution by political power, including St. Thomas More and St. John Fisher, St. John the Baptist, SS. Peter and Paul, and the First Martyrs of the Church of Rome.
- In past years, people have participated in the Fortnight in diverse ways, including interfaith prayer services, special Masses and holy hours, and public events where speakers have highlighted the various threats to religious liberty, including at home and abroad.
- This year, we encourage Christians to use these two weeks to reflect on the importance of religious freedom so that the Church might have space to carry out her mission of service and mercy. We also invite Christians to pray for our brothers and sisters who face intense persecution in other parts of the world.
- In addition to updated fact sheets, there are two new major resources this year:

Pray-Reflect-Act series – Daily reflections on different aspects of freedom and Christian mission.

How to Talk about Religious Liberty – In our polarized country, Christians can make a significant contribution by speaking with confidence and respect about issues that are important to us. This short, practical guide aims to help Christians talk about the topic of religious freedom.

- The U.S. Supreme Court is expected to rule in late June on the *Trinity Lutheran* case. Trinity Lutheran Church sought a grant from the State of Missouri to resurface the playground of the church's preschool.
 - Missouri runs a program that allows schools and nonprofits to obtain recycled tire pieces, which provide a safer playground surface for children. The program also benefits the environment by recycling old tire scraps that would otherwise end up in landfills.
 - However, Trinity Lutheran's application was denied, despite its application scoring high enough to receive a grant, solely because it is affiliated with a church.
 - A favorable decision for Trinity Lutheran could chip away at anti-Catholic Blaine amendments, which are present in over 30 state constitutions, and could be cited by school-choice advocates to expand scholarship opportunities for low-income students to attend faith-based schools.
- We continue to see increasing violent persecution of religious believers around the world. We pray that the Fortnight will lift up the sacrifice of so many believers. We can honor them by robustly living our faith and by welcoming those who have survived religious persecution and who now seek asylum and refuge here in the U.S.
- Political disputes continue to unfold over state-level religious freedom protections, such as legislation that would protect people of faith from government discrimination. Clear teaching on religious freedom, supported by prayer, is especially needed.
- Archbishop William Lori will open the Fortnight with a special Mass on **Wednesday, June 21 at 7:00 pm EDT** at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Baltimore, MD. Since the final days of the Fortnight coincide with the Convocation of Catholic Leaders, Archbishop Lori will also celebrate a special Mass at the Convocation in Orlando in lieu of a closing Mass in Washington, D.C.
- Through prayer, education, and public action during the ***Fortnight for Freedom: Freedom for Mission***, we will promote the importance of preserving the essential right of religious freedom, for now and the future, for Catholics and for those of *all* faiths.