



Ad Hoc Committee for Religious Liberty

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Most Reverend William E. Lori
Archbishop of Baltimore
Chairman

April 29, 2016

My brother bishops,

In preparation for the [*Fortnight for Freedom: Witnesses to Freedom*](#), which will take place from June 21 to July 4, 2016, Conference staff has once again prepared materials that you and your diocesan staff may use to celebrate the Fortnight. This year's theme emphasizes the many witnesses to religious freedom, both past and present. Please see the revised [logo](#) incorporating this year's theme (in English and Spanish), which we would encourage you to use to promote this upcoming two-week period.

During the Fortnight, our liturgical calendar celebrates a series of great martyrs who remained faithful in the face of persecution by political power—St. John Fisher and St. Thomas More, St. John the Baptist, SS. Peter and Paul, and the First Martyrs of the Church of Rome. In the secular calendar, we anticipate that the U.S. Supreme Court will rule at some point during the Fortnight (likely around June 27) on seven cases brought by religious non-profit entities, including the Little Sisters of the Poor, challenging the “accommodation” under the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services (HHS) contraceptive coverage mandate.

This year, we will have a special opportunity to encounter witnesses to freedom, as we have made arrangements with Stonyhurst College in England to bring **relics of St. Thomas More and St. John Fisher** to several cities throughout the United States so that the faithful may venerate these martyrs of the English Reformation. Please check the [website](#) for the locations and dates of the relics tour.

The materials below are already publicly available (in English and Spanish) through the website www.Fortnight4Freedom.org, so please feel free to distribute widely or provide website links:

1. ***NEW*** video on [The Right to Religious Freedom](#) (explaining Church teaching on religious freedom from *Dignitatis Humanae* and highlighting current challenges to religious freedom, including the HHS mandate and global religious persecution) and [Video Discussion Guide](#)
2. ***NEW*** Fourteen “[Witnesses to Freedom](#)” ([Spanish](#)) (one-pagers on individual witnesses to the faith from here in the U.S. and around the world, including St. Edith Stein, Bl. Oscar Romero, the Coptic Christian martyrs, and the Little Sisters of the Poor)
3. [Parish Guide to celebrating the Fortnight](#) (including several suggestions)
4. A series of examples of [Threats to Religious Liberty in the U.S.](#)
5. A series of examples of [International Religious Freedom](#) issues

6. [14-Day Study Guide on *Dignitatis Humanae*](#) (note that we recently celebrated the 50th anniversary of the “Declaration on Religious Freedom” from the Second Vatican Council)
7. [Religious Liberty High School Lesson Plans](#)
8. [Litany for Liberty](#)
9. [Prayers of the Faithful](#) (part of the Call to Prayer for Life, Marriage & Religious Liberty)
10. [Holy Hour Template](#) (also part of the Call to Prayer)

Fortnight 2016 **Talking Points** will also be provided to diocesan staff and are attached to this letter as well.

The materials listed immediately below should not be posted online but may be distributed to parishes for use during Fortnight liturgies:

1. Daily Homily Helps (for weekday Masses during the Fortnight)
2. Sunday Homily Helps (for June 26 and July 3)
3. Ecumenical Prayer Service Outline
4. Intercessory Prayers for Ecumenical Service
5. Passages from Scripture for use during the Fortnight for Freedom

Once again, we are planning [two special Masses](#) to begin and end the Fortnight for Freedom. On **June 21** at 7 p.m. EDT, I will celebrate Mass at the Baltimore Basilica (America’s First Cathedral) to begin the Fortnight. On **July 4** at noon EDT, Cardinal Donald Wuerl will celebrate Mass at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C. Bishop David Zubik of Pittsburgh will be the homilist at the July 4 Mass. EWTN and CatholicTV will televise both Masses.

Please continue to check the Fortnight website, www.Fortnight4Freedom.org, for any updates. Any diocesan staff with questions about the Fortnight should call or email Hillary Byrnes at 202-541-3454 (hbyrnes@usccb.org) or Aaron Weldon at 202-541-5407 (aweldon@usccb.org).

We are grateful to diocesan staff for all the work that has gone into the Fortnight during the last four years in your dioceses. Thank you again for your prayers and support for the 2016 Fortnight for Freedom and for your united voices in the promotion and defense of religious freedom, both at home and abroad!

Faithfully in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "William E. Lori".

Most Reverend William E. Lori
Archbishop of Baltimore
Chairman, Ad Hoc Committee for Religious Liberty