



Archdiocese of Louisville

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OFFICE of the ARCHBISHOP

May 1, 2012

Dear Father,

May God bless you during this holy Easter season! As you know, since January there has been much attention to the Church's efforts to address the very troubling Health and Human Services (HHS) coercive mandate requiring almost all private health plans to cover contraception, sterilization and abortion-inducing drugs. For the first time in our nation's history, the federal government will force religious institutions to facilitate drugs and procedures contrary to our moral teaching, and it seeks to define which religious institutions are "religious enough" to merit an exemption.

While our U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has had to respond quickly to many urgent situations with this situation, there is a concern about continued education for the faithful. Thus, the Conference has been working to develop a series of resources to address a wide range of issues from our concerns over religious liberty to the Church's teaching on sexuality and openness to new human life. Some of these will simply be catechetical, and others will encourage parishioners to take some needed action.

The Conference has announced a special time for prayer and education including the 14 days from June 21 – the vigil of the Feasts of St. John Fisher and St. Thomas More, great martyrs who remained faithful in the fact of religious persecution – to July 4, Independence Day. This time period, called the "Fortnight for Freedom," will be dedicated to prayer, study, catechesis, and public action about both our Christian and American heritage of liberty. I have enclosed a series of suggestions in the areas of prayer and education for parishes to observe during this time period. Please note that there are a variety of options that can be tailored to your setting. I encourage all parishes to carry out at least one of these activities.

I also am enclosing a sample bulletin insert that can be used as a catechetical piece during the month of May. The focus is on "Religious Liberty, the Most Cherished of American Freedoms," and it encourages parishioners to send an email message to the Department of Health and Human Services during its limited comment period. The bulletin blurb can be provided in color or black and white or in Spanish. Please be in touch with Cecelia Price (585-3291 or cprice@archlou.org) if you wish to receive an electronic PDF of the Spanish version or an electronic PDF in black and white. (Hard copies of all of these materials will be included in the parish mailing this week.)

Sincerely yours in our Lord,

Most Reverend Joseph E. Kurtz, D.D.
Archbishop of Louisville

Fortnight for Freedom: June 21 – July 4

- All parishes are encouraged to incorporate a prayer for religious liberty during liturgically appropriate times on the weekends of June 23-24 and June 30- July 1. The diocese will provide a document in electronic and hard copy form by May 15 so that parishes can copy and distribute this prayer for these weekends. The prayer is from *Our First, Our Most Cherished Liberty*, which was released by the bishops in March. The prayer is:

Almighty God, Father of all nations, for freedom you have set us free in Christ Jesus (Gal 5:1). 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.

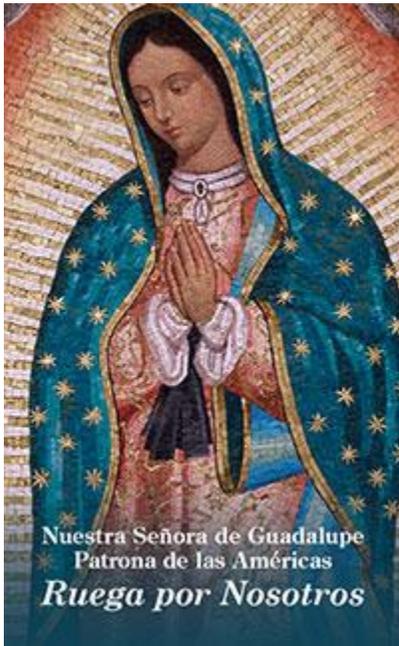
- Parishes have the option of ordering prayer cards from USCCB with a longer “Prayer for Religious Liberty” that can be made available to parishioners for their private prayer and reflection. (See attached image and prayer available in both English and Spanish.) Cards are \$12/100 with quantity discounts. The Archdiocese will order in bulk so that parishes can get the best quantity discounts. A prayer card order form is attached; please return form or email the Communications Office by May 15. (Fax: 585-2466; cprice@archlou.org or mail to Cecelia Price, P.O. Box 1073, Louisville, KY 40201-1073).
- Parishes are encouraged to incorporate either the shorter or longer prayer— as appropriate— into already-scheduled meetings, Eucharistic adorations, etc.
- The Archdiocese will put together a package of electronic resources that parishes can make available on their web sites. This will include the resources that USCCB is preparing for this special period of education and prayer. This will be available by May 31.
- Parishes are encouraged to promote reading of the statement *Our First, Our Most Cherished Liberty*. In addition to promoting it generally among parishioners, parishes may wish to engage existing small communities or *Why Catholic* groups to read and discuss the document. The Archdiocese will create a simple study guide or make available resources from the USCCB. This will be available by May 31.
- By May 31, the Archdiocese will create a bulletin insert (8.5 x 11) with the prayer on one side and brief, salient points about the issue of religious liberty on the other. We also will make available brief bulletin blurbs to run for 4 Sundays (June 10, June 17, June 24, and July 1).
- The Archdiocese will create a special hero section for our web page with resources and information and the segment from *Conversations* about religious liberty. The segment on religious liberty from *Conversations* will run on the Faith Channel during the Fortnight for Freedom time period. This will be launched the week of June 10.
- Please let us know about any special initiatives that you decide to undertake during this time period, so that we can advise *The Record* for coverage.

Prayer Cards for Parishioners



English Prayer Card: \$12/100
Quantity _____

Quantity discounts of from 5% (10-24) to 30% (over 500). The Archdiocese will order in bulk for both cards for parishes to get the best discount and then bill parishes. Fax form to Cecelia Price, 502/471-2243 or email to cprice@archlou.org. Mail to Archdiocesan Communications Center, P.O. Box 1073, Louisville, KY 40201-1073. Order by May 15. Prayer content found on next page.



Spanish Prayer Card: \$12/100
Quantity _____

Parish Name _____ Location _____
Ordered by _____ Email (or phone) _____

(Text of Prayer)

O GOD OUR CREATOR,

from your provident hand we have received
our right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.
You have called us as your people and given us
the right and the duty to worship you, the only true God,
and your Son, Jesus Christ.
Through the power and working of your Holy Spirit,
you call us to live out our faith in the midst of the world,
bringing the light and the saving truth of the Gospel
to every corner of society.

We ask you to bless us
in our vigilance for the gift of religious liberty.
Give us the strength of mind and heart
to readily defend our freedoms when they are threatened;
give us courage in making our voices heard
on behalf of the rights of your Church
and the freedom of conscience of all people of faith.

Grant, we pray, O heavenly Father,
a clear and united voice to all your sons and daughters
gathered in your Church
in this decisive hour in the history of our nation,
so that, with every trial withstood
and every danger overcome—
for the sake of our children, our grandchildren,
and all who come after us—
this great land will always be “one nation, under God,
indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.”

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

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Esteban Murillo manufactured by the Reverenda Fabbrica di San Pietro di Vaticano (RFSPV), 1930.
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