

FORTNIGHT FOR FREEDOM 2013 LEAD MESSAGES

Religious Liberty

- Faith enriches public life.
- “America is at its best when religion has a place at the table.”
- Faith inspires people to serve their neighbors. It brings people together. It enriches conversation on important public issues. It centers the lives of countless Americans. Religious liberty protects this central role faith plays in our public life.
- People of faith are standing together against government coercion of religious belief.
- Religious freedom is under threat both at home and abroad.
- Religious liberty is our first freedom upon which all others depend.

The HHS Mandate

- The HHS mandate coerces religious believers to act against our most deeply held beliefs in violation of our Constitution, our laws, and our long tradition of religious liberty. It's unjust and unlawful.
- The government can't force us to choose between abandoning our most deeply held beliefs or facing crippling fines. Our constitution and laws protect us from this kind of coercion.
- The HHS mandate will harm the poor and those who serve them. This regulation will force faith-based charities to pay steep fines, reducing their ability to serve the poor, the sick, and the vulnerable.
- A broad coalition of people with a wide range of beliefs opposes this mandate.
- This isn't about the Catholic Church trying to force its beliefs on others. It's about the government trying to force its beliefs on the Catholic Church.
- This isn't about access to contraception, which is widely available. It's about a government regulation forcing us to act against our teachings.

Other Threats to Religious Liberty

- Same-sex marriage: Illinois, Boston, San Francisco, and Washington, D.C. have driven local Catholic Charities out of adoption or foster-care services

because those charities wouldn't violate their beliefs by placing children with same-sex couples or unmarried, cohabiting opposite-sex couples.

- Immigration: Several states have passed laws that forbid what they see as the "harboring" of undocumented immigrants, and which the Church sees as its duty of Christian charity and pastoral care.
- Human trafficking: Despite the great track record of the USCCB's Migration and Refugee Services in helping victims of human trafficking, the federal government sought to require MRS to provide or refer for contraceptive and abortion services in violation of Catholic teaching as a condition of receiving government contracts.
- International: Ongoing and escalating attacks against religious believers occur throughout the world. In Nigeria, a Christmas day attack on a Christian church killed 37 and wounded 57. In Egypt, extremists have burned houses and shops in Christian areas. In China, three bishops and six priests are among many held in undisclosed locations by the government.

The Fortnight for Freedom

- The Fortnight extends from June 21st, the vigil of the Feast of St Thomas More & St John Fisher, to Independence Day on July 4th.
- During that time Catholics around the country will stand together in support of religious liberty, our first freedom.
- We hope to draw attention to growing intrusions on religious liberty like the government mandate that forces Catholics to violate our deeply held beliefs or face stiff fines. That mandate takes effect this coming August 1st, making this year's Fortnight especially important.
- We're asking everyone to:
 - **Pray** for the protection of religious liberty and increased respect for the role of faith in public life.
 - **Educate** yourselves and your family, friends, and neighbors by using the many resources found at www.Fortnight4Freedom.org.
 - **Support** national events like our opening and closing masses, as well as local diocesan events.
 - **Encourage** your legislators to support H.R. 940, the Health Care Conscience Rights Act.
- Once again, Catholics around the country will be standing up for our first freedom. We hope everyone will join us.