

Fortnight for Freedom

Ivana T. Meshell, Director of Adult Faith Formation



Our archdiocesan Office of Communications informs us that the second annual Fortnight for Freedom will take place from June 21 to July 4, consisting of national and local efforts to educate Americans on challenges to religious liberty both at home and abroad.

The country faces many current challenges to religious liberty, including the August 1, 2013 deadline for religious organizations to comply with the HHS mandate; Supreme Court rulings that could redefine marriage in June, and religious liberty concerns in other areas, such as immigration and humanitarian services.

Our Archbishop, Daniel Cardinal DiNardo urges faithful to participate in Fortnight for Freedom, as follows: "The Fortnight for Freedom, which was celebrated for the first time last year, will take place from June 21 — the vigil of the Feasts of St. John Fisher and St. Thomas More — to July 4, Independence Day.

Last year, the dioceses around the nation held numerous events promoting religious freedom. In 2013, the Church continues to face many challenges to religious liberty, including the Aug. 1 deadline for religious organizations to comply with the HHS mandate; potential Supreme Court rulings that could redefine marriage in June, causing serious religious liberty issues for Catholic adoption agencies and many others; and religious liberty concerns in other areas, such as immigration and humanitarian services.

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 the Baptist, saints Peter and Paul, the First Martyrs of the Church of Rome, St. John Fisher and St. Thomas More.

"There is not a shadow of right on the general government to intermeddle with religion. Its least interference with it would be a most flagrant usurpation. I can appeal to my uniform conduct on this subject that I have warmly supported religious freedom."

James Madison

Through prayer, study and peaceful public action during the Fortnight for Freedom, Catholics hope to remind themselves and others all throughout the United States about the importance of preserving the fundamental right of religious freedom.

Catholics are constantly called to live out their faith in their daily lives. In charities, the faithful comfort the sick, feed the hungry, care for the poor and protect life. In the marketplace, Catholics are guided by values and strive everywhere to practice what they preach.

Across America, the right for Catholics to live out their faith is being threatened — from Washington forcing Catholic institutions to provide services that contradict Catholic belief, to state governments prohibiting charities from serving the most vulnerable. And around the world, it's even worse — Catholics face persecution and even death for their witness.

"With the challenges this country is facing, it is hoped that this call to prayer and penance will help build awareness among the faithful, as well as spiritual stamina and courage for effective witness. We also hope that it will encourage solidarity with all people who are standing for the precious gifts of life, marriage and religious liberty," said Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone of San Francisco, chairman of the bishops' Subcommittee for the Promotion and Defense of Marriage."

Cardinal Dinardo's column can be found at **Cardinal's Corner: www.archgh.org**. Further details about the Fortnight can be found at **www.Fortnight4Freedom.org**. Here you will find many resources, including a list of some of the **threats we face and what you can do about it**, including:

§ *HHS mandate for contraception, sterilization, and abortion-inducing drugs.* The mandate of the Department of Health and Human Services forces religious institutions to facilitate and fund a product

contrary to their own moral teaching. Further, the federal government tries to define which religious institutions are “religious enough” to merit protection of their religious liberty.

§ *Catholic foster care and adoption services.* Boston, San Francisco, the District of Columbia, and the State of Illinois have driven local Catholic Charities out of the business of providing adoption or foster care services—by revoking their licenses, by ending their government contracts, or both—because those Charities refused to place children with same-sex couples or unmarried opposite-sex couples who cohabit.

§ *Discrimination against small church congregations.* New York City adopted a policy that barred the Bronx Household of Faith and other churches from renting public schools on weekends for worship services, even though non-religious groups could rent the same schools for many other uses. Litigation in this case continues.

§ *State immigration laws.* Several states have recently passed laws that forbid what they deem as “harboring” of undocumented immigrants—and what the Church deems Christian charity and pastoral care to these immigrants.