



Catholics for Freedom of Religion

America's 1st Freedom: Religious Liberty

In 1965 the Second Vatican Council gave to the world a declaration of religious freedom called *Dignitatis Humanae*, which states: "This Vatican Council declares that the human person has a right to religious freedom." The American bishops were major contributors to the birth of this document because they were intimately acquainted with religious freedom, being citizens of the only nation on earth that has the principle of religious liberty at its very foundation.

Now this liberty has come under attack. The principle of freedom of religion is violated by a regulation coming out of the new healthcare law. This regulation, the HHS Mandate, denies freedom of conscience to millions of Americans whom it would force to provide contraception, sterilization and abortion inducing drugs as part of the insurance coverage for employees of all entities exempting only the churches themselves. As Cardinal Dolan has said, "*We have become certain of two things: Religious Freedom is under attack, and we will not cease in our struggle to protect it.*"

The Fortnight for Freedom, June 21 to July 4, 2013, has been set aside by the USCCB as an important time to learn and pray and work together to restore the God given religious liberty guaranteed to Americans of every faith in our Constitution and Bill of Rights.

Please mark your calendar for these events of the **Fortnight For Freedom**. The opening mass will be celebrated by Bishop Murphy on June 21, 7:30pm at the Cathedral of St. Agnes. On June 29, *Catholics for Freedom of Religion* will co-sponsor a rally "Religious Freedom: Our 1st Amendment Right" from 10am - 1pm at St John the Baptist High School. The closing mass of the fortnight will be celebrated by Bishop Robert Brennan on July 4, at 12:10pm at St Agnes Cathedral.

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." First Amendment, U.S. Constitution



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The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) mandate, as of Aug 1, 2013, forces religious institutions, hospitals, schools and charities, as well as conscientious objecting individual employers, to provide contraception, sterilization and abortion inducing drugs as part of health insurance benefits. The fines for not complying with this HHS mandate are crippling and threaten the very existence of these institutions and businesses, seeking to coerce them into bending to the dictates of an unjust law.

What would this fine cost your child's Catholic School or University? What would it cost the Catholic hospital where your family receives care? How could these institutions survive?

Join fellow Catholics in the events of the **Fortnight For Freedom to learn and pray and act to restore America's religious liberty**. The opening mass will be celebrated by Bishop Murphy on June 21, 7:30pm at the Cathedral of St. Agnes. On June 29, *Catholics for Freedom of Religion* will co-sponsor a rally "Religious Freedom: Our 1st Amendment Right" from 10am - 1pm at St John the Baptist High School. The closing mass of the fortnight will be celebrated by Bishop Robert Brennan on July 4, at 12:10pm at St Agnes Cathedral.

Please RSVP for rally by June 24 to reserve space. No charge for rally. Refreshments provided.
email: religiousfreedom@drvc.org or call: Ms. Dennicee Spooner [516-678-5800](tel:516-678-5800), extension 224

"We should not be treated as if we are second class citizens because we disagree with the government's new and arbitrary insistence that all of us have to follow their prescriptions despite our religious beliefs and our right to freedom of conscience. Those rights are God-given, not state-granted. Every person and every religious institution already has from God what is guaranteed in our Constitution and Bill of Rights: freedom of religion and of conscience."
Bishop William Murphy, Rockville Centre



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The parish groups, *Catholics for Freedom of Religion*, are following Pope Benedict's call for the laity to engage courageously in the culture and Cardinal Dolan's urging that as members of the laity we employ the charism or special gift from the Holy Spirit which empowers us to take our values into the public square. We also hear our own Bishop Murphy urging the laity to follow the website of the USCCB.org and of Llcatholic.org to stay informed and find out what concerted actions can be taken in defense of religious freedom. He also encourages each of us to participate in a grass roots advocacy group such as *Catholics for Freedom of Religion* forming in parishes across the Diocese.

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"We have become certain of two things: religious freedom is under attack, and we will not cease in our struggle to protect it."
Cardinal Timothy Dolan



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"The spirit of our age is profoundly secular and secularism accepts religion - if it accepts it at all - only on its own terms. Under this view, religion is subordinated to the political interests of the secular state and it is precisely this subordination of religion to the state that the First Amendment seeks to prevent."

Pope Benedict XVI

"Don't interfere with anything in the Constitution. That must be maintained, for it is the only safeguard of our liberties." *Abraham Lincoln*

"If once the people become inattentive to the public affairs, you and I, and Congress and Assemblies, Judges and Governors, shall all become wolves. It seems to be the law of our general nature, in spite of individual exceptions." *Thomas Jefferson*

Please rally with fellow Catholics from all over Long Island for *Religious Freedom: Our 1st Amendment Right*, to demonstrate our resolve that Freedom of Religion will not disappear during our lifetime...that this generation will stand and take action to preserve that God given freedom for "ages and millions yet unborn".

Bishop Murphy will be the keynote speaker along with Richard J. J. Sullivan, Jr. President and CEO of Catholic Health Services of Long Island. The four student winners of our speech competition will present their speeches, various school music groups will perform, and lay leaders of Long Island's Catholics for Freedom of Religion chapters will introduce the work in their parishes.

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"We need to speak frankly with each other when our freedoms are threatened. Now is such a time.... for religious liberty is under attack."

From "Our First, Most Cherished Liberty" by the USCCB



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America's religious freedom was assured to all generations by the careful crafting of the 1st amendment of the Bill of Rights. The robust freedom of religion envisioned by the founders has allowed our country to flourish without the religious strife seen elsewhere in the world. Americans were to be forever free to follow their conscience in the service of their God and maintain a morality that would sustain our constitutional freedoms. One of our Founding Fathers, John Adams, said, *"Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other."*

As stated by the USCCB: *"That is our American heritage, our most cherished freedom. It is the first freedom because if we are not free in our conscience and our practice of religion, all other freedoms are fragile. If citizens are not free in their own consciences, how can they be free in relation to others, or to the state? If our obligations and duties to God are impeded, or even worse, contradicted by the government, then we can no longer claim to be a land of the free, and a beacon of hope for the world."*

You are invited to come together in prayer with fellow Long Island Catholics who understand the peril of this time. The coming months will see the vise that is the HHS mandate tightening around our Catholic institutions...a vise that, left unchecked, will crush the life and liberty out of Catholic practices and institutions in a way unimagined by us all.

We must pray together that we might stand together in strength and courage with our faith in God and our love of America's freedoms guiding the actions we must take. Thomas Jefferson said, *"The God who gave us life gave us liberty"*. These rights of life and liberty are not ours to lose. They were gifted to us by God and conveyed to us by our forefathers. We are this day charged as rightful stewards to defend these rights for future generations.

Come together for the closing mass of the **Fortnight For Freedom** to be celebrated by Bishop Robert Brennan at the Cathedral of St Agnes, Rockville Centre, NY, on July 4th at 12:10pm.

"While Americans presume that the Constitution guarantees their rights, in practice our rights survive or disappear based on how firmly we defend them".
Archbishop Charles J. Chaput, Philadelphia