



### Religious Freedom Week Talking Points

- Religious Freedom Week will take place from June 22 – 29, 2018. It begins with the feast day of Sts. Thomas More and St. John Fisher, includes the Nativity of St. John the Baptist, and ends with the feast of Sts. Peter and Paul.
- The theme for this year is **Serving Others in God's Love**. Religious freedom is necessary if we are to have the space to continue to serve in areas like education, adoption and foster care, health care, and migration and refugee services. USCCB has produced resources for prayer and action on these issues for each day of the week. We encourage Christians to reflect on the importance of religious freedom so that the Church might have space to carry out her mission of service and mercy. We also invite Christians to pray for our brothers and sisters who face intense persecution in other parts of the world.
- USCCB is providing “Pray – Reflect – Act” one-pagers—one for each day on different religious liberty topics. The materials are meant to inspire people to learn more about religious liberty from a Catholic perspective, to pray about particular issues, and give them the tools to act on what they learn, whether it's by finding ways for their parish to serve their community or perhaps even by calling their Member of Congress to promote legislation supporting religious liberty.
- A major area of concern this year is freedom for child welfare service providers. The opioid crisis is putting a strain on the foster care system. The number of children in need is going up. The number of families willing to take the children into their homes is going down. And in places like Illinois, Massachusetts, California, and D.C., the service providers who have a track record of excellence in recruiting and assisting foster families have been shut down.
- The federal Child Welfare Provider Inclusion Act (H.R. 1881 / S. 811) would protect the religious liberty of child welfare service providers, including adoption and foster care agencies. Similar legislation has been introduced and passed in several states. All are encouraged to check out the [USCCB Action Alert Center](#) and state Catholic conference websites for legislative updates on this and other important policy issues!

- The U.S. Supreme Court is expected to rule in late June (possibly during Religious Freedom Week) on a case involving a Christian baker in Colorado named Jack Phillips, who declined in conscience to create a custom cake celebrating a same-sex marriage. The case may have critical implications for the freedom of people of faith to live out their faith in daily life.
- Religious Freedom Week has succeeded the Fortnight for Freedom for a few reasons:
  1. A “Week” is simpler than a “Fortnight.” Many public awareness campaigns take place over the course of a week—such as Catholic Schools Week, National Migration Week, and National Marriage Week. A week provides a focused period of time to concentrate our attention on the issue of religious freedom. This particular week centers around the feast days of saints who bore particular witness to religious liberty.
  2. Although the Fortnight sought to raise awareness of several religious freedom issues, it was associated heavily in many people’s minds with the HHS contraceptive mandate. To be sure, the HHS mandate is still a live issue and still being challenged in several courts, but awareness needs to be raised concerning other important religious freedom issues as well, including legal and policy challenges facing our adoption and foster care services, our migration and refugee services, and other charitable works of the Church.
  3. Over the last few years, the Fortnight has shifted to more of a prayer and education campaign. The change from ad hoc to standing Committee for Religious Liberty provides an opportune moment to explain how religious freedom encompasses a number of areas. It really affects the entire Church, and not just our Church, but all people of faith who seek to live out their faith in daily life, in the public square.
- Through prayer, education, and public action during Religious Freedom Week, we will promote the importance of preserving the essential right of religious freedom, for now and the future, for Catholics and for those of *all* faiths.