

Religious Freedom Week 2020: For the Good of All Talking Points

- **Religious Freedom Week takes place from June 22 – 29 each year.** It begins with the feast day of Sts. Thomas More and 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 **For the Good of All.** Religious freedom is good, not only for Catholics, but for all people. All people desire to know their Creator. All people have a natural impulse to seek the good and live in accordance with that good. All people can flourish when they pursue the truth about God and respond to that truth.
- Religious freedom means that all people have the space to flourish. Religious freedom is both an American value and an important part of Catholic teaching on human dignity. When we promote religious freedom, we promote the common good and thus strengthen the life of our nation and the community of nations.
- The USCCB provides “Pray – Reflect – Act” documents at www.usccb.org/ReligiousFreedomWeek—one for each day on different religious liberty topics. These materials help people learn about religious liberty from a Catholic perspective, pray about particular issues, and act on what they learn by advocating for policies that promote religious freedom.
- This year’s Pray-Reflect-Act gives a sense for the breadth of religious liberty issues of particular concern for the bishops at the present time. For international concerns, the Office of Religious Liberty has collaborated with the Office of International Justice and Peace to highlight two countries where persecution of religious minorities is severe: China and the Central African Republic. We need to be in solidarity with people throughout the world who suffer for their faith.
- Domestically, a major area of concern continues to be freedom for Catholic institutions, such as schools, hospitals, and child welfare service providers. As the COVID-19 pandemic has shown, for a society to be both free and strong, it needs the participation of all people of good will. And yet activists with a narrow focus on sexual expression have in recent years been working to exclude faith-based institutions from fully contributing to the common good.
- Legislation such as the Child Welfare Provider Inclusion Act seeks to ensure that multiple institutions are free to participate in public life. Please check the USCCB Action Center at www.votervoices.net/USCCB/home for legislative updates on this and other important policy issues!

- Another issue of special concern is the safety of worshippers. The past year has seen an uptick in attacks on houses of worship, particularly anti-Semitic attacks. Religious freedom means that all people are free to gather for worship and service without fear. The Church teaches that the government has a role to play in fostering the religious life of a country, and that is why the USCCB supports increased funding for the Nonprofit Security Grant Program. This program allows nonprofits, including houses of worship, to receive funding for improvements to their security, such as surveillance cameras and training for personnel. While the program has been successful, only one third of applicants received funding. The USCCB is urging Congress to quadruple the amount of funding available, from \$90 million to \$360 million. Learn how you can support these efforts by checking the USCCB Action Center at www.votervoices.net/USCCB/home.
- To receive religious freedom updates from the USCCB, text FREEDOM to 84576.
- Through prayer, education, and public action during Religious Freedom Week, we can promote the essential right of religious freedom for Catholics and for those of *all* faiths.