

Focus on Religious Freedom

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Religious Freedom Week: June 22-29 continued

The annual observance of Religious Freedom Week began as the Fortnight for Freedom in 2012, when the Church and other religious liberty advocates were concerned about threats to the Defense of Marriage Act.⁽¹⁾ In 2021, the U.S. Bishops continue to see threats to Catholic institutions in many different areas of concern. Also, this year's observance comes as the Supreme Court is due to rule on a Philadelphia First Amendment case that has implications for religious freedom in the area of foster care and adoption. "Domestically, a major area of concern continues to be freedom for Catholic institutions, such as schools, hospitals, and child welfare service providers, to carry out their missions with integrity," said a bishops' press release.⁽²⁾

The Church is encouraged to "Pray - Reflect - Act" on the following themes:

Adoption & Foster Care
Catholic Social Services during the Pandemic
The (Misguided) Equality Act
Church Vandalism
Catholics in Nigeria
Conscience Rights for Medical Professionals
Solidarity with Christians in Iraq
Free Speech⁽³⁾

"The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) Committee for Religious Liberty collaborated with the Office of International Justice and Peace to raise awareness and show solidarity with people throughout the world who suffer for their faith, from the persecution of Christians in Nicaragua to highlighting Pope Francis's trip to Iraq this year."⁽⁴⁾

Through prayer, education, and public action during religious Freedom Week, the USCCB hopes to promote the essential right of religious freedom for Catholics and for those of all faiths.

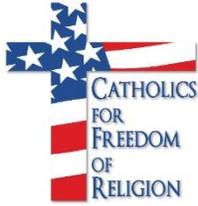
"Religious freedom remains one of American's most precious possessions. And, as my brothers, the United States Bishops, have reminded us, all are called to be vigilant, precisely as good citizens, to preserve and defend that freedom from everything that would threaten or compromise it. -Pope Francis

(aleteai.org, 6/3/21(1)(2); catholicphilly.com, 6/4/21(3); camdendiocese.org, 5/2021; catholicnewsheald.com, 6/2/21; dosaf1.com, 6/3/21(4); catholicvote.org, 6/2/21(5))

Happening Now: Ruling that Vermont Cannot Deny Aid to Catholic School Students

Vermont's Town Tuition Program (TTP) provides funding for students in towns where the public school system does not cover all grade levels. When TTP administrators refused funding to four students who chose to attend a Catholic high school, their parents and the diocese sued and won at the Court of Appeals. "Four years ago, the Supreme Court reminded states that it has repeatedly confirmed that denying a generally available benefit solely on account of religious identity imposes a penalty on the free exercise of religion ...," wrote Judge Steven Menashi. "Officials who administer Vermont's (TTP) nevertheless continued to discriminate against religious schools and students in violation of the first Amendment."⁽⁵⁾

Shortened Version Below:



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The U.S. Bishops continue to see threats to freedom for Catholic institutions in many areas. "Domestically, a major area of concern continues to be freedom for Catholic institutions, such as schools, hospitals, and child welfare service providers, to carry out their missions with integrity," said a bishops' press release.⁽¹⁾ They await an upcoming Supreme Court ruling on a Philadelphia case with religious freedom implications in the area of foster care and adoption.

"The USCCB's Committee for Religious Liberty collaborated with the Office of International Justice and Peace to raise awareness and show solidarity with people throughout the world who suffer for their faith ..."⁽²⁾

Together, we can promote the essential right of religious freedom for Catholics and for others of all faiths.
(aleteia.org, 6/3/21(1); dosafll.com, 6/3/21(2); catholicvote.org, 6/2/21(3); catholicnewsherald.com, 6/2/21)

"(May) you defend these rights, especially your religious freedom, for it has been given to you by God himself ..." - Pope Francis

Happening Now : Ruling that Vermont Cannot Deny Aid to Catholic School Students

Vermont's Town Tuition Program (TTP) provides funds for students in towns where the public school system does not cover all grade levels. When TTP denied funding for four students to attend a Catholic high school, their parents sued and the judge ruled in their favor citing a Supreme Court decision that states cannot "discriminate against religious schools and students in violation of the First Amendment."⁽³⁾