



## **Focus on Religious Freedom**

From Catholics for Freedom of Religion  
[www.cffor.org](http://www.cffor.org)

### **Celebrate! Religious Freedom Day is Here!**

"Each year since 1993, the President declares January 16th to be 'Religious Freedom Day,' and calls upon Americans to 'observe this day through appropriate events and activities in homes, schools, and places of worship.'

"This is a great opportunity to teach students a civics lesson about the First Amendment and how it can be applied to schools," writes Gateways to Better Education.

Our Founders leaned heavily on Thomas Jefferson's *Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom*, passed on January 16, 1786, when they established the First Amendment's guarantee of religious freedom. This Virginia legislation stopped the practice of taxing people to pay for the support of the local state approved church and clergy and it protected the civil rights of people to express their religious beliefs without suffering discrimination.

To commemorate the day, schools can recognize Religious Freedom, the foundation of all our freedoms, with some of the following ideas:

- \* Read the Presidential Proclamation that every president composes and signs each year on January 16th and can be found at [www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov).
- \* Ask students to discuss and/or write about "What religious freedom means to me."
- \* Talk about countries where religious freedom is not allowed and that almost 3/4 of the world's population is denied this freedom that Americans enjoy.

#### **Action Steps:**

1. Contact your local School District and Board of Education and encourage them to recognize and celebrate Religious Freedom Day.
2. Go to [www.cffor.org](http://www.cffor.org) and [www.GoGateways.org](http://www.GoGateways.org) for additional information and ideas.

([cffor.org](http://cffor.org); [GoGateways.org](http://GoGateways.org))