

Religious Freedom Week 2022: Life and Dignity for All

- **Religious Freedom Week takes place 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 **Life and Dignity for All.** This year, as we approach the Supreme Court decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization*, we are especially mindful of the debates around our country about abortion. The Church plays a crucial role in both bearing witness to the gospel of life and serving all of those people who will be affected by these discussions and their outcomes.
- The USCCB provides “Pray—Reflect—Act” resources 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.
- The Pray—Reflect—Act resources this year focus on religious liberty issues that intersect with life issues. Moreover, the Committee for Religious Liberty has collaborated with the Office of International Justice and Peace to raise awareness about the [religious liberty in China](#). 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, to carry out their missions with integrity. In particular, [protecting Catholic adoption and foster care](#) will become even more vital, as we take new steps in building a culture of life and dignity for all in the United States.
- To build a culture of life and dignity for all, [the Church must support women and children](#). In 2020, the USCCB Committee on Pro-Life Activities launched *Walking with Moms in Need*. *Walking with Moms in Need* seeks to help parishes become places where pregnant and parenting women can find support and accompaniment.
- As part of the nationwide effort *Walking with Moms in Need*, parishes that have the support of their bishop and pastor are asked to complete a simple inventory of the resources currently available in their local area, assess the results and identify gaps, and plan and implement a parish response based on their findings. We encourage Catholics to learn about how their parishes can connect with local institutions and accompany women and children at www.walkingwithmoms.com.

- Pregnancy resource centers provide counseling and support for moms who want to choose life. In some places, though, abortion activists have sought to curtail the activities of these centers, working to force them to advertise abortion. In 2018, pregnancy resource centers in California successfully defended their work at the U.S. Supreme Court. But in places like Connecticut, for example, abortion activists show no signs of stopping their campaign against pregnancy resource centers. These centers support life and dignity for all.
- Another [issue of special concern](#) is the wave of [attacks on Catholic churches](#) that began in May of 2020. One of the most common types of these incidents involves damage to statues of the Holy Family or the saints, especially decapitation of the statues. The USCCB has recorded over 120 attacks so far, and that number continues to grow. The precise reasons for these attacks are often unknown. In some cases, they are tied to anger at perceived injustices from the past. Several attacks have involved the destruction of pro-life displays and graffiti with pro-abortion messages. Attacking sacred places—whether through damage to physical property or by projecting pro-abortion messages on a church while people pray for an end to abortion, as activists did in [Washington, DC](#) and [New York](#) in January—harms all people of faith, for the very nature of sacred spaces is that they are set apart and treated with respect.
- The USCCB calls on all people of good will to urge governmental officials to shine a light on the problem of Church vandalism by speaking up when churches and other houses of worship are attacked, and encourage Congress to adequately fund the [Nonprofit Security Grant Program](#). People can take action at <https://www.votervoice.net/USCCB/campaigns/93732/respond>.
- This year, the USCCB Committee for Religious Liberty, in collaboration with the Secretariat of Catholic Education and Our Sunday Visitor Institute, hosted a [religious liberty essay contest](#). The competition was open to high school juniors and seniors. This year's theme is "Witnesses to Freedom." Contestants were asked to share the story of witness to freedom—a story of the people who inspire us. Religious freedom is a fundamental right. But the truth of religious freedom has needed, and continues to need, witnesses. Philosophers and statesmen have articulated key principles and ideas. Advocates have stood up for the freedom of others. Saints have suffered persecution and even martyrdom. These witnesses to freedom show us what it means to promote religious freedom and what it means to be truly free. The top essays from the competition will be published during Religious Freedom Week.
- Beginning in July 2021, the Committee for Religious Liberty began publishing articles on basic issues in religious liberty. This resource helps Catholics learn more about Church teaching and fundamental questions related to religious freedom. The essays are available at www.usccb.org/FirstFreedomBlog.

- Connect with the USCCB Committee for Religious Liberty. Text FREEDOM to 84576 and [Sign up for First Freedom News](#), the USCCB Committee for Religious Liberty's monthly newsletter.
- Through prayer, education, and public action during Religious Freedom Week, we can promote the fundamental right of religious freedom for Catholics and for people of all faiths.