



## *Ad Hoc Committee for Religious Liberty*

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Most Reverend William E. Lori  
Archbishop of Baltimore  
Chairman

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Women and men of faith, religious leaders, and all people of good will:

I first want to thank all who have stood firmly with faith-based communities in our vigorous opposition to the various threats to religious freedom that we face today. It is imperative that we continue to stand together as we have in the past to remind ourselves and the world of the beauty, purpose, and hope engendered by religious faith.

Our beliefs guide the way we work, love, study, play, and think; they inspire us and make us who we are. The majority of men and women who gave shape to this country were deeply religious and thankfully, though with difficulty, learned that differences and disagreements do not have to lead to hatred, violence, or suppression. Religion and religious freedom strengthens us as individuals, as families, as communities, and as a nation.

I therefore invite you to join with us between June 21 and July 4 in a “Fortnight for Freedom” to show our neighbors and the world that we are proud of our great national heritage of religious liberty for all, and we are determined to keep that heritage strong. We are setting aside these two weeks to place special attention on our first and most cherished liberty through prayer, study, catechesis, and public action. I ask you to join us in this great national celebration.

Some possibilities for fruitful activity include designating at least one specific day or time in the two-week period as a day of prayer – for ourselves and those overseas who wish to be free not only to speak and worship as they wish, but also to live in the world as faithful, active members of their religious communities and society. Independently or in collaboration with other faith leaders, you may wish to prepare a public statement or public event. I anticipate that many houses of worship will address religious freedom in their sermons on the two weekends within the Fortnight; perhaps your leaders will also find this a good opportunity to teach about religious freedom from the perspective of your own tradition. This would also be an opportunity to share stories and educate the young about the importance of religious freedom.

In addition to prayers and other actions within your own communities, Catholic resources and activities will be made publicly available to all, and I welcome you to participate with us. While I anticipate most efforts are being organized at the local level, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) will be collecting as examples some of the many materials being produced locally. Some of those activities and resources are already available on the Bishops’ website: [www.fortnight4freedom.org](http://www.fortnight4freedom.org) which will be continually updated.

One final and specific effort that I wish to call to your attention is the ringing of bells. I invite any religious community to join with us at 12:00 EDT (9:00 AM PDT) on July 4, 2012 in ringing bells in joyous support of religious freedom for all.

Faithfully in Christ,

Most Reverend William E. Lori  
Archbishop of Baltimore  
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