



June 4, 2015

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus,

In just a few short weeks the fourth “Fortnight for Freedom” will take place from June 21-July 4. I join my brother bishops again in calling for a special time of prayer, study, and public action for the protection of our first freedom – religious liberty – at home and abroad. This year’s theme is “Freedom to Bear Witness” to the truth of the Gospel. The word “martyr” in Greek is translated as “witness.” To bear witness to Christ, to proclaim the Good News in its fullness, requires a willingness to suffer for its sake. We must ask ourselves, “Are we prepared to proclaim the Good News in season and out?”

This particular Fortnight comes at a time in which current threats to religious liberty in our own country are numerous, and religious persecution and restriction abroad are staggering. I encourage you to use this period of time for prayer, study, and advocacy so that you are equipped with the spiritual and practical resources you need to bear witness to the fullness of your faith in our culture. More information is available at www.arlingtondiocese.org/religiousliberty.

I invite you to join me at the opening Mass for the Fortnight for Freedom offered by Archbishop William Lori on Sunday, June 21 at 10:45 a.m. at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Baltimore, Maryland. A closing Mass will be celebrated by Cardinal Donald Wuerl with homilist Archbishop Thomas Wenski of Miami, FL, at 12 p.m. on July 4 at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C.

Lastly, I invite you to a special diocesan event on Saturday, June 27 at the Church of St. Ambrose in Annandale. We will be setting aside our own morning for prayer and education on religious liberty as a diocesan community. The day will begin with our monthly Respect Life Mass at 9 a.m. and will be followed by a presentation on religious freedom by Fr. David Pignato, S.T.D., J.D., a priest of the Diocese of Fall River and Professor at St. John’s Seminary, Boston.

On June 20, 2014, Pope Francis said, “Religious freedom is not just a matter of thought or private decision. It is the freedom to live – both privately and publicly – according to the ethical principles that are a consequence of the truth found.” I ask you to join me in praying through the intercession of our diocesan patron, St. Thomas More, whose feast day is on June 22, that we and our brothers and sisters throughout the world may enjoy the freedom to bear witness to our faith in its fullness.

Faithfully in the Heart of Christ,

Most Reverend Paul S. Loverde
Bishop of Arlington