



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

DIOCESE OF GREEN BAY

P.O. Box 23825 • Green Bay, WI 54305-3825 • 920-272-8194 • FAX 920-435-1330

June 8, 2012

My Dear Pastors, Parish Directors, and Pastoral Coordinators,

On April 12, the Ad Hoc Committee on Religious Liberty of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) issued a document, “Our First, Most Cherished Liberty,” outlining the bishops’ concerns over threats to religious freedom, both at home and abroad. The bishops called for a “Fortnight for Freedom,” a 14-day period of prayer, education and action in support of religious freedom, from June 21-July 4.

I am joining with my brother bishops to encourage ways in which we can highlight the importance of defending religious freedom right here in the Diocese of Green Bay. All Catholic institutions are encouraged to do the same, especially in cooperation with other Christians, Jews, people of other faiths and all who wish to defend our most cherished freedom. To that end, in Green Bay we will hold a special ecumenical Evening Prayer Service to launch the “Fortnight for Freedom.” It will take place on Sunday, June 24 at 4 p.m. at St. Joseph Chapel on the diocesan campus. Please encourage our people to join me.

The fourteen days from June 21—the vigil of the Feast of St. John Fisher and St. Thomas More to July 4, Independence Day, are dedicated to this “Fortnight for Freedom”—a great hymn of prayer for our country. Our liturgical calendar celebrates a series of great martyrs who remained faithful in the face of persecution by political power—St. John Fisher and St. Thomas More, St. John the Baptist, SS. Peter and Paul, and the First Martyrs of the Church of Rome. Culminating on Independence Day, this special period of prayer, study, catechesis, and public action would emphasize both our Christian and American heritage of liberty. I will celebrate a special Mass on July 4 at 8:30 a.m. at St. Francis Xavier Cathedral for that intention.

I ask parishes or clusters of parishes in our diocese to choose a date during this “Fortnight for Freedom” for local special events that would complement our national campaign of teaching and witness for religious liberty. I encourage you to preach and teach about this topic on the Sundays and all weekdays during this two-week period. If you are able, you are encouraged to plan an ecumenical prayer with people of other faiths in your local area. Materials posted to our website at [www.gbdioc.org/fortnight](http://www.gbdioc.org/fortnight) include an outline of an ecumenical service, homily helps for use during the fortnight, a prayer for religious liberty that can be printed in your bulletins and some bulletin inserts. Please use whatever you find helpful.

Thank you for helping our people continue to pray and work for the protection of this most fundamental right in our country.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

The Most Reverend David L. Ricken, DD, JCL  
Bishop of Green Bay