



# NOVENA FOR RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

A novena is a traditional form of prayer which takes place over a period of nine days (the number of days which Mary and the Apostles spent in prayer between the Ascension and Pentecost).

To participate in this novena, spend some time during each of the nine days using the daily prayers, reflections, and the Novena Prayer printed below.

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## JUNE 25 • DAY ONE

### Opening Prayer

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and enkindle in us the fire of your love.

### Today's Reflection

From well before Cardinal Gibbons [in the late 1800s], Catholics in America have been advocates for religious liberty, and the landmark teaching of the Second Vatican Council on religious liberty was influenced by the American experience.... We have been staunch defenders of religious liberty in the past. We have a solemn duty to discharge that duty today.... [W]e address an urgent summons to our fellow Catholics and fellow Americans to be on guard, for religious liberty is under attack both at home and abroad.

-- From Our First, Most Cherished Liberty. U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2012.

## JUNE 26 • DAY TWO

### Opening Prayer

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and enkindle in us the fire of your love.

### Today's Reflection

Of particular concern are certain attempts being made to limit that most cherished of American freedoms, the freedom of religion. Many of you have pointed out that concerted efforts have been made to deny the right of conscientious objection on the part of Catholic individuals and institutions with regard to cooperation in intrinsically evil practices. Others have spoken to me of a worrying tendency to reduce religious freedom to mere freedom of worship without guarantees of respect for freedom of conscience.

-- From Pope Benedict XVI's address to American bishops, Jan. 19, 2012.

## JUNE 27 • DAY THREE

### Opening Prayer

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and enkindle in us the fire of your love.

### Today's Reflection

Religious liberty is not only about our ability to go to Mass on Sunday or pray the Rosary at home. It is about whether we can make our contribution to the common good of all Americans. Can we do the good works our faith calls us to do, without having to compromise that very same faith?... What is at stake is whether America will continue to have a free, creative and robust civil society--or whether the state alone will determine who gets to contribute to the common good, and how they get to do it.

-- From Our First, Most Cherished Liberty. U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2012.

### Novena Prayer

Almighty God, Father of all nations,

For freedom you have set us free in Christ Jesus.

We praise and bless you for the gift of religious liberty, the foundation of human rights, justice and the common good.

Grant to our leaders the wisdom to protect and promote our liberties.

By your grace may we have the courage to defend them for ourselves and for all those who live in this blessed land.

We ask this through the intercession of Mary Immaculate, our patroness,

And in the name of your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, with whom you live and reign, One God, for ever and ever. Amen.





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## JUNE 28 • DAY FOUR

### Opening Prayer

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### Today's Reflection

George Washington wrote that "the establishment of civil and religious liberty was the motive that induced me to the field of battle." Thomas Jefferson assured the Ursuline Sisters--who had been serving a mostly non-Catholic population by running a hospital, an orphanage, and schools in Louisiana since 1727--that the principles of the Constitution were a "sure guarantee" that their ministry would be free "to govern itself according to its own voluntary rules, without interference from the civil authority."

-- From Our First, Most Cherished Liberty. U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2012.

## JUNE 29 • DAY FIVE

### Opening Prayer

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and enkindle in us the fire of your love.

### Today's Reflection

The civil rights movement was an essentially religious movement, a call to awaken consciences.... In his famous Letter from Birmingham Jail in 1963, Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. boldly said, "The goal of America is freedom.... I would agree with St. Augustine that 'an unjust law is no law at all'.... How does one determine when a law is just or unjust? A just law is a man-made code that squares with the moral law or the law of God. An unjust law is a code that is out of harmony with the moral law."

-- From Our First, Most Cherished Liberty. U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2012.

## JUNE 30 • DAY SIX

### Opening Prayer

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and enkindle in us the fire of your love.

### Today's Reflection

It is a sobering thing to contemplate our government enacting an unjust law. An unjust law cannot be obeyed. In the face of an unjust law, an accommodation is not to be sought, especially by resorting to equivocal words and deceptive practices. If we face today the prospect of unjust laws, then Catholics in America, in solidarity with our fellow citizens, must have the courage not to obey them. No American desires this. No Catholic welcomes it. But if it should fall upon us, we must discharge it as a duty of citizenship and an obligation of faith.

-- From Our First, Most Cherished Liberty. U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2012.

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## JULY 1 • DAY SEVEN

### Opening Prayer

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and enkindle in us the fire of your love.

### Today's Reflection

The human person has a right to religious freedom. This freedom means that all men are to be immune from coercion on the part of individuals or of social groups and of any human power, in such wise that in matters religious no one is to be forced to act in a manner contrary to his own beliefs....This right of the human person to religious freedom is to be recognized in the constitutional law whereby society is governed. Thus it is to become a civil right.

-- From Second Vatican Council's Declaration on Religious Liberty, 1965.

## JULY 2 • DAY EIGHT

### Opening Prayer

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and enkindle in us the fire of your love.

### Today's Reflection

We are sadly aware that religious liberty in many other parts of the world is in much greater peril. Our obligation at home is to defend religious liberty robustly, but we cannot overlook the much graver plight that religious believers, most of them Christian, face around the world.... If religious liberty is eroded here at home, American defense of religious liberty abroad is less credible.... Therefore it is our task to strengthen religious liberty at home...so that we might defend it more vigorously abroad.

-- From Our First, Most Cherished Liberty. U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2012.

## JULY 3 • DAY NINE

### Opening Prayer

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and enkindle in us the fire of your love.

### Today's Reflection

What we ask is nothing more than that our God-given right to religious liberty be respected. We ask nothing less than that the Constitution and laws of the United States, which recognize that right, be respected. In insisting that our liberties as Americans be respected, we know as bishops that what our Holy Father said is true. This work belongs to "an engaged, articulate, and well-formed Catholic laity endowed with a strong critical sense vis-a-vis the dominant culture."

-- From Our First, Most Cherished Liberty. U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2012.

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JUNE 21 to JULY 4, 2012

