



THE MOST SACRED OF ALL PROPERTY: RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AND THE PEOPLE OF MARYLAND

KEY MESSAGES

November 2011

CORE MESSAGE – ELEVATOR SPEECH

Religious freedom is essential to our human dignity. It is a primary right that undergirds our country's founding.

Religious freedom involves more than the private practice of religion. It also involves the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religious belief; and the right to speak and act in accordance with those beliefs both in the work place and in the public square.

Throughout history, people of faith have contributed a necessary and positive perspective to the public square, often offering a voice for those who have no one to speak for them.

In spite of the long history of religious liberty in this country, we must remain vigilant and resist increasing attempts to infringe on the right to speak and act freely in accordance with one's religious beliefs.

SUPPORT MESSAGE – BASIC HUMAN RIGHT

- Laws are founded on moral principles that define who we are as individuals and a society. Our Constitution's First Amendment protects the rights of ALL citizens, religious or not, to speak out and participate in helping shape those laws.
- Religious freedom is a basic human right and is integral to the establishment of a just and generous society.
- Religious liberty began in America with the founding of Maryland and today it is one of our state's greatest contributions to the nation and the world.
- It is rooted in our human dignity and protected by the First Amendment to the US Constitution.
- Religious liberty is a foundational element of a vibrant democracy and helps guarantee those other precious freedoms we Americans enjoy.

SUPPORT MESSAGE – RELIGIOUS FREEDOM'S UNIVERSAL TRUTH

- Faith is “the conscience of society,” says Cardinal Wuerl.
- The Lord offers us His love but He does not force us to accept it. The Lord respects our freedom to accept Him or to reject Him; so too must government and society.
- As Catholics, we participate in the public square not to impose our religious beliefs on others, but to propose the timeless and universal truth of the dignity of the human person. This truth is the foundation of all of the Church's advocacy.
- Religious freedom protects the ability to practice any faith or no faith. It defends a person's right to convert from one faith to another. It preserves the right to follow one's conscience, in acts both internal and external, in private and in public, as an individual and as a member of a community.

- Religious freedom is not merely a civil right afforded us by our government, but, more fundamentally, it is a natural right due each person because of his human dignity.
- Religious liberty enables religious groups to provide a voice for the voiceless.
- Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. – “The church must be reminded that it is not the master or the servant of the state, but rather the conscience of the state.”

SUPPORT MESSAGE – CHURCH IN THE PUBLIC SQUARE

- As Catholics and citizens, we have a right and duty to advocate for laws that uphold the common good by protecting the poor, the dignity of life, the value of the family, and the religious freedom of all.
- The Church has the moral responsibility to remind those in power to use their authority to serve the poor and vulnerable, build up the common good, and respect human life and dignity.
- All Catholics and citizens have a moral obligation to participate in the political process and to bring their values and beliefs into the public debate.

SUPPORT MESSAGE – RELIGIOUS FREEDOM BEING ERODED

- Our religious liberty is being silently and subtly eroded.
- In recent years, secularists have sought to restrict the ideals of religious liberty to Sunday morning worship and the right to exercise our faith and follow our conscience in all aspects of our lives is a right that is increasingly viewed with hostility.
 - Pregnancy centers in Montgomery County and Baltimore City have been targets of government restrictions because of their pro-life mission.
 - A Catholic nurse in New York was forced – under threat of losing her job and nursing license – to participate in a late-term abortion even though she was hired with the understanding that she could not participate in abortions.
 - A Christian photographer was found to have engaged in illegal discrimination for declining to photograph a same-sex “marriage” ceremony.
- We cannot freely worship (or choose not to worship) God if government officials have the power to tell us how to do so. Sadly, there has been a growing trend of government intrusion into the institutional and administrative life of the Church.
- The only way to preserve our religious liberty is through the vigilance of concerned citizens and their willingness to stand up for this right.
- We need your prayers – thanking God for the great gift of religious liberty; asking for help to use it wisely; asking for blessings on those who do not yet see our inherent right of conscience and religious freedom.
- We need your support – spreading the message of religious liberty and the right of conscience; informing others of the challenges to these rights and why they are integral to a just society.
- We need your action – vote; sign-up for Maryland’s Catholic Advocacy Network; contact legislators; speak out.