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News and resources from the USCCB Ad Hoc Committee for Religious Liberty



## Free to Serve USCCB Religious Liberty News *"We are Catholics, We are Americans"*

May 2016

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### **New and Notable**

#### **Fortnight for Freedom 2016: Witnesses to Freedom**

We are less than one month away from the Fortnight for Freedom! This year, we are celebrating the lives of 14 people of faith who bear witness to authentic freedom in Christ. We are also coordinating a nationwide tour of relics of Sts. Thomas More and John Fisher, courtesy of Stonyhurst College in the UK. New Fortnight materials and relics tour information are available at [www.fortnight4freedom.org](http://www.fortnight4freedom.org).

#### **USCCB President Reacts To Supreme Court HHS Mandate Decision**

On May 16, 2016, the U.S. Supreme Court issued a *per curiam* opinion in the case of *Zubik v. Burwell*, in which Catholic and other religious organizations are challenging the HHS mandate requiring them to facilitate health insurance coverage of sterilization, contraception, and drugs and devices that may cause abortions. [Read more...](#)

**Richard Garnett Commentary on *Zubik v. Burwell* in SCOTUS Blog  
The Future of Accommodation**

What just happened? It has been nearly five years since the Department of Health and Human Services announced an "interim final rule" requiring that contraceptives approved by the Food and Drug Administration be included, without cost sharing, in most employees' health plans. That rule provided an indefensibly narrow religious exemption, one that was effectively limited to houses of worship and did not cover most religious universities, schools, social-service agencies, outreach ministries, or health-care providers. [Read more...](#)

### **U.S. House of Representatives Protects Religious Organizations with Federal Grants and Contracts**

An amendment to the Fiscal Year 2017 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) by Congressman Steve Russell (R-OK) provides protections for any "religious corporation, religious association, religious educational institution, or religious society" from being discriminated against by the federal government because of that organization's employment policies. Practically speaking, the adoption of this amendment would permit religious organizations the freedom to hire and manage employment decisions based on the tenets of their faith and still compete for federal grants and contracts. The entire NDAA bill has now passed the House, and the NDAA will be considered by the Senate in the coming weeks. [Read more on USCCB support for the Russell Amendment to the NDAA...](#)

### **U.S. House Passes Big Upgrades to International Religious Liberty Law**

Rep. Chris Smith (R-N.J.), the author of the bill - [which USCCB International Justice and Peace Chairman, Bishop Oscar Cantú urged Congress to support](#) - outlined what is at stake abroad for religious freedom in a statement: "The world is experiencing an unprecedented crisis of international religious freedom, a crisis that continues to create millions of victims; a crisis that undermines liberty, prosperity and peace; a crisis that poses a direct challenge to the US interests in the Middle East, Russia, China and sub-Saharan Africa and elsewhere." [Read more...](#)

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## **New Video**

### **The Right to Religious Freedom**



The Little Sisters of the Poor face a dire threat to their religious freedom in the United States. [Find out more](#) about what the Catholic Church teaches on religious freedom, including the groundbreaking Declaration on Religious Freedom (*Dignitatis Humanae*) from the Second Vatican Council.

Let's Talk! Small community gatherings are a great, simple way to build the life of our Church. They are also important for a healthy civil society. [Here are some ideas for using the new video to kick start a small-group conversation about religious freedom.](#)

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## Religious Freedom in the Year of Mercy

By Archbishop William Lori

Pope Francis has set aside this year as a time of special grace, a Year of Mercy. It is not merely a special program meant to be implemented for twelve months and then forgotten. No, the Pope is using this Jubilee Year of Mercy to call our attention to something very fundamental in our lives of faith, indeed the lens through which believing disciples must see themselves, the Church, and the world. Nothing is more fundamental than God's mercy, indeed, mercy is God's Name. [Read more...](#)

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*Non datur libertas sine veritate.*

