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## Focus on Religious Freedom

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### From Our Founders: America's Heritage of Freedom of Religion and Conscience

From the earliest colonists through the adoption of America's Constitution and later the Bill of Rights, the issue of religious freedom was paramount in the considerations of the citizens and founders of our nation.

By the time of the American Revolution, America's leaders reflected the colonists' belief in the importance of God, the Bible, worship and the acceptance of all faiths. Throughout the revolution prayer was a constant and vital support. History shows our founders prayed earnestly and saw frequent instances of what they believed to be divine intervention protecting our armies and leaders.

George Washington said, "No people can be bound to acknowledge and adore the invisible hand which conducts the affairs of men more than the people of the United States. Every step by which they have advanced to the character of an Independent Nation seems to have been distinguished by some token of providential agency."

Benjamin Franklin at the Constitutional Convention in 1787 said, "In the beginning of the contest with Great Britain we had daily prayer in this room for the divine protection. Our prayers, Sir, were heard and they were graciously answered."

Rev. Samuel Langdon, Founding Father, said, "Preserve your government with the utmost attention and solicitude, for it is the remarkable gift of heaven."

Referring to our Constitution, Samuel Adams said, "The sum of all is, if we would most truly enjoy the gift of heaven, let us become a virtuous people; then we shall both deserve and enjoy it."

Our prayers and action are essential to preserve 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment freedom of religion and conscience.

### From the USCCB: Prayer for Religious Liberty

**O GOD OUR CREATOR**, from your provident hand we have received our right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. You have called us as your people and given us the right and the duty to worship you, the only true God, and your Son, Jesus Christ. Through the power and working of your Holy Spirit, you call us to live out our faith in the midst of the world, bringing the light and the saving truth of the Gospel to every corner of society.

We ask you to bless us in our vigilance for the gift of religious liberty. Give us the strength of mind and heart to readily defend our freedoms when they are threatened; give us courage in making our voices heard on behalf of the rights of your Church and the freedom of conscience of all people of faith.

Grant, we pray, O heavenly Father, a clear and united voice to all your sons and daughters gathered in your Church in this decisive hour in the history of our nation, so that, with every trial withstood and every danger overcome—for the sake of our children, our grandchildren, and all who come after us—this great land will always be "one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all." We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

***"[May] you defend these rights, especially your religious freedom, for it has been given to you by God himself." - Pope Francis***