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## Focus on Religious Freedom

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### The Importance of Being Obviously Catholic

Passing on our faith through valued traditions

A bishop explained at a Religious Freedom service that as a young boy in communist Poland he had to hide his intention to enter the priesthood. His family, friends, parish priest and even his parents could not be told. He kept his vocation a secret because if his school administrators or the local government officials found out, the young man knew the harsh political and social reality of communist Poland would result in his being refused an education and prevented from entering the priesthood.

That young man, and millions of other men and women around the world, were and still are denied what most Americans take for granted... the First Amendment religious freedom to choose our faith and our worship and live it openly and freely without fear of persecution.

America's freedom of religion is not perfectly protected, but is strong enough that most Americans can live their faith satisfactorily to their conscience demands. However, when Supreme Court Justice Samuel Alito was recently asked if he thought our religious freedom laws would continue to protect Americans his answer was that he believes the religious freedom laws will prevail, but the culture of faith may not.

Thanks to the protection of America's religious freedom and rights of conscience we can create a culture of faith in our homes and our family lives...a culture reflecting that we are obviously and deliberately Catholic. Because we are protected in living out this culture, we can pass on the faith traditions which become the fertile soil where our children can develop their own, mature assent to the Catholic faith.

The traditions of each liturgical season as well as daily Catholic traditions will define such a family culture. Observing with the family the disciplines of Lent and the observances of Holy Week and the Easter vigil; honoring Mother Mary during the month of May with an outside flower garden or an inside May altar; participating in a Corpus Christi procession with the church congregation and observing Advent as the preparation for the Birth of the Christ child which will be the cause and focus of our Christmas celebration are rich liturgical traditions.

In addition to the seasonal traditions "there are traditions embedded in the structure of Catholic family life, traditions that become the pulse of the household. There is the evening Rosary. The bowing at the name of Christ. The signs of the cross when passing a Catholic parish. The prayers before meals and bed time. The little family prayer table with candles, crucifix, and images of Our Lady and St. Francis. The visits to the Blessed Sacrament. The lighting of holy candles for prayer intentions. And all the other numerous little customs that make our lives uniquely *Catholic*." Traditions help our children experience "the importance, the priority and the habit of living as faith-filled children of God." Read more: <https://tinyurl.com/4vzejn3u>