



## Focus on Religious Freedom

### Let's Celebrate! Religious Freedom Day is Here!

The President has declared January 16 as Religious Freedom Day every year since 1993 in commemoration of the 1786 Virginia Statute on Religious Freedom. This legislation, drafted by Thomas Jefferson, was the model for the First Amendment of the Bill of Rights in the Constitution.

An easy-to-understand paraphrase of Jefferson's lexicon, written for young school children to understand, would be:

"God created us to be free in our thinking. He is all-powerful but He chose not to force us to obey Him.... Truth is a wonderful thing. Truth can defend itself if you just let it be told. People need to be free to talk about what they believe is the truth about God." <sup>(1)</sup>

Too many school age children and their parents are unaware of the "Big Secret: America's Public Schools ARE NOT "God-Free Zones." This truth is taught in the 9 minute "Students of Faith" video from Catholics for Freedom of Religion on our home page at [www.cffor.org](http://www.cffor.org). The student actors and the narrator explain the origins of religious freedom in America, the importance of Religious Freedom Day and the rights of students to live their faith in many ways throughout their school day.

#### **All presidents, since 1993, have issued a Proclamation on Religious Freedom Day:**

"Be it Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives ...that January 16, 1993, is designated as Religious Freedom Day (and the President calls on) all people of the U.S. to celebrate their religious freedom..."  
President George H.W. Bush, 1993 Proclamation

"Religious freedom helps to give America's people a character independent of their government, fostering the formation of individual codes of ethics, without which a democracy cannot survive."  
President Bill Clinton, 1994 Proclamation

"Religious freedom is a cornerstone of our Republic, a core principle of our Constitution, and a fundamental human right."  
President George W. Bush, 2002 Proclamation

"Faith can bring us closer to one another, and our freedom to practice our faith and follow our conscience is central to our ability to live in harmony."  
President Barack Obama, 2010 Proclamation

"From its opening pages, the story of America has been rooted in the truth that all men and women are endowed with the right to follow their conscience, worship freely, and live in accordance with their convictions."  
President Donald Trump, 2020 Proclamation

([gogateways.org/religiousFreedomDay](http://gogateways.org/religiousFreedomDay) (1); [religiousfreedomday.com](http://religiousfreedomday.com); [nationaltoday.com](http://nationaltoday.com); [cffor.org](http://cffor.org))

***O God our Creator,***

***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.***  
***USCCB - Prayer for Religious Liberty***