



# DIOCESE OF GRAND RAPIDS

*Office of the Bishop*

June 24/25, 2017

My dear friends in Christ,

The political and cultural landscape in America continues to challenge our right to religious freedom. While we live in a country where religious belief and practice without interference or persecution is theoretically protected under the United States Constitution's First Amendment, the fundamental right to practice and express our faith continues to face threats at the federal, state and local levels.

For this reason, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) continues to call for the annual nationwide observance of a Fortnight for Freedom from June 21 through July 4. The theme this year is *Fortnight for Freedom: Freedom for Mission*, focusing on the Catholic Church's right to provide services through our educational, health care, and charitable institutions while upholding and honoring the truth of our faith, which is the inspiration for why we serve.

During these 14 days of study, catechesis and public action, I invite you to join me in prayer for our country and its leaders. I encourage parishes to hold special events that reflect a great example of teaching and witness for religious liberty. Visit the diocesan website at [dioceseofgrandrapids.org](http://dioceseofgrandrapids.org) for additional resources.

Please pray for the protection of religious liberty in the United States and abroad. I encourage you to be a joyful example of the beauty of the Catholic Church and her teachings. Please take time to watch the "Freedom to Serve" commercials ([CatholicsServe.com](http://CatholicsServe.com)) from the Michigan Catholic Conference (MCC), study the topic of religious liberty in the United States, participate in events being held in connection with the Fortnight, and encourage our government officials to support legislation that reflects Catholic social teaching.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ *David J. Walkowiak*

Most Reverend David J. Walkowiak  
Bishop of Grand Rapids