



DIOCESE OF JUNEAU, ALASKA
OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

June 21, 2012

*To be read at all Masses in the
Diocese the weekend of June 24.*

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Many of you are aware of recent issues within our Country that threaten our religious liberties. Unfortunately, it is not a single issue, but rather a growing list of events that need our attention and response. This list includes state immigration laws, altering church structure and governance, Christian students on college campuses, Catholic foster care and adoption services, acts of discrimination, and, the most notable, the recent Health and Human Services mandate.

When the administration of our government indicated that they sought to redefine the Church and identify who we could serve in ministry – the bishops of the United States had to respond. Here in Southeast Alaska we want to address these issues with accurate information and sift through the “media hype” as well as any political slant.

In order to do this, and in participating in the "Fortnight For Freedom" (a 14 day observance of prayer established by the USCCB focusing on religious liberties), the priests of the Diocese of Juneau and myself have agreed to speak with one voice in next week's homily. That is to say, we have worked through an outline and have crafted certain points that will be made in our sermon next week. In addition to this, questions will be available at next week's Masses which will be used for those who wish to gather with the priest at a time in the following week to discuss these issues. It is my hope that many of you will attend these gatherings which will take place in each parish throughout Southeast Alaska.

In addition to presenting a similar homily throughout the Diocese and conducting discussion sessions in the days that follow, the church bells (for those who have them) will be rung at all of the Catholic churches in the state of Alaska at 12 noon on the Fourth of July in participation of a concerted effort involving Catholic churches throughout the United States. I have also asked the priests to set aside time for Eucharistic adoration between now and the Fourth of July which will include the recitation of the litany for freedom. It is my hope that through prayer and charity we will be able to stand strong as people of faith within this one nation under God – upholding our religious liberties and continuing to live in the land of the free.

Be assured of my prayers for you and your loved ones as we commemorate the signing of the Declaration of Independence and rejoice in the freedoms that make this country great.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Rev. Edward J. Burns
Bishop of Juneau