

# Justice, Peace and Life

June 2023

## Pray-Reflect-Act to promote religious freedom June 22-June 29



From June 22 (the Feast of Saints Thomas More and John Fisher) to June 29 (the Solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul), the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops invites us Catholics to pray, reflect, and act to promote religious freedom.

At the web site [www.usccb.org/ReligiousFreedomWeek](http://www.usccb.org/ReligiousFreedomWeek) you'll find an intention for each day of that week. They include respect for sacred spaces, protection of employees' right to reasonable accommodations for religious expression in the workplace, and an end to sectarian violence in Nigeria. We need to stand up for the rights of Catholic hospitals to refuse to perform abortions. We need to protect the rights of Catholic parishes and social services agencies to "harbor" (e.g. provide a place to sleep to) undocumented immigrants. These stances are expressions of our faith and our love for our sisters and brothers.

Religious Freedom Week is an opportunity to learn about threats to religious freedom at home and abroad, to pray and to take action. It's also a time to give thanks for the freedom we continue to have in our country.



### TODAY!! Speak out for the Earth, Our Common Home

Environmental advocates across the state are pushing for the modernization of New York State's 40-year-old Bottle Deposit Law. This would increase the deposit from a nickel to a dime and would expand the types of containers to include sports drinks, iced teas, juices, wine, and liquor. The current law has greatly boosted recycling rates and reduced litter. Expansion would cut solid waste costs for municipal governments and decrease landfill use.



The NYS legislative session ends on June 8! Two calls to leaders can help get this bill passed- Assembly Member Deborah Glick: **518-455-4841** and Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie: **518-455-3791** Ask them to get A6353 out of committee and onto the floor for a vote!

# Human Rights Abuses in Nicaragua



One of the topics for Religious Freedom Week is the situation of Catholics in Nicaragua. As stated in the reflection for June 24:

*“The Church in Nicaragua—by far the most trusted and the last remaining independent civil society institution in the country, ever since the regime of Daniel Ortega and his wife and Vice President Rosario Murillo imprisoned and exiled virtually the entire political opposition—is facing a critical intensification of religious persecution.*

*Since 2018, when the Nicaraguan bishops supported civil society’s right to protest unpopular government policies, the Church in Nicaragua has been facing a systematic and persistent campaign of aggression from the government and pro-government operatives, with churches being attacked with deadly force, priests and religious imprisoned or exiled, the Apostolic Nuncio expelled, and, in February 2023, the unjust sentencing of Bishop Rolando Alvarez of Matagalpa, Nicaragua, to 26 years in prison. In February 2023, the regime exiled 222 political prisoners, including 11 priests, to the United States.*

*The viciousness of the persecution is highlighted in the numerous acts of desecration against the Blessed Sacrament that have been committing by pro-government forces and the banning of traditional processions by the majority Catholic population during Holy Week.”*



*Bishop Rolando Álvarez of Matagalpa, Nicaragua, is monitored by police in early August 2022.*

Sadly, Catholics are not the only target of oppression in Nicaragua. The Group of Experts on [Human Rights on Nicaragua](#), an independent body mandated by the UN Human Rights Council, along with [Amnesty International](#), and [International Service on Human Rights](#), among other human rights organizations, have reported on the widespread repression of civil society there. Organizations have been banned, media outlets have been shut down, people have been arbitrarily arrested, and some even stripped of their citizenship. In this [video](#), an indigenous human rights activist tells how she was not allowed to return to Nicaragua. The U.S. has placed sanctions on Nicaragua but prayers and more actions are needed to address this ongoing human rights crisis.

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