

Proclamation 7639 of January 14, 2003

National Sanctity of Human Life Day, 2003

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Our Nation was built on a promise of life and liberty for all citizens. Guided by a deep respect for human dignity, our Founding Fathers worked to secure these rights for future generations, and today we continue to seek to fulfill their promise in our laws and our society. On National Sanctity of Human Life Day, we reaffirm the value of human life and renew our dedication to ensuring that every American has access to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

As we seek to improve quality of life, overcome illness, and promote vital medical research, my Administration will continue to honor our country's founding ideals of equal dignity and equal rights for every American. Every child is a priority and a blessing, and I believe that all should be welcomed in life and protected by law. My Administration has championed compassionate alternatives to abortion, such as helping women in crisis through maternity group homes, encouraging adoption, promoting abstinence education, and passing laws requiring parental notification and waiting periods for minors.

The Born-Alive Infants Protection Act, which I signed into law in August 2002, is an important contribution to our efforts to care for human life. This important legislation helps protect the most vulnerable members of our society by ensuring that every infant born alive, including one who survives abortion, is considered a person and receives protection under Federal law. It helps achieve the promises of the Declaration of Independence for all, including those without the voice and power to defend their own rights.

Through ethical policies and the compassion of Americans, we will continue to build a culture that respects life. Faith-based and community organizations and individual citizens play a critical role in strengthening our neighborhoods and bringing care and comfort to those in need. By helping fellow citizens, these groups recognize the dignity of every human being and the possibilities of every life; and their important efforts are helping to build a more just and generous Nation. By working together to protect the weak, the imperfect, and the unwanted, we affirm a culture of hope and help ensure a brighter future for all.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, GEORGE W. BUSH, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim Sunday, January 19, 2003, as National Sanctity of Human Life Day. As we reflect upon the sanctity of human life, I call upon all Americans to recognize this day with appropriate ceremonies in our homes and places of worship, to rededicate ourselves to compassionate service, and to reaffirm our commitment to respecting the life and dignity of every human being.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this fourteenth day of January, in the year of our Lord two thousand three, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-seventh.

GEORGE W. BUSH

Proclamation 7640 of January 15, 2003

Religious Freedom Day, 2003

*By the President of the United States of America
A Proclamation*

Each year on January 16, we celebrate Religious Freedom Day in commemoration of the passage of the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom by the Virginia General Assembly, which occurred on this day in 1786. Drafted by Thomas Jefferson, this historic law provided the inspiration and the framework for the religious freedom clauses in the First Amendment to the United States Constitution.

The religious freedom provisions of our Constitution—the Establishment Clause and the Free Exercise Clause—open the first of the ten amendments that make up the Bill of Rights. Because the Framers placed the guarantee of religious freedom before other cherished rights, religious liberty in America is often called the first freedom. The right to have religious beliefs and to freely practice such beliefs are among the most fundamental freedoms we possess. James Madison once said that “the Religion then of every man must be left to the conviction and conscience of every man; and it is the right of every man to exercise it as these may dictate. This right is in its nature an unalienable right.”

Our Founding Fathers recognized that religious freedom is a right we must protect with great vigilance. We must continue our efforts to uphold justice and tolerance and to oppose prejudice; and we must be resolved to countering any means that infringe on religious freedom.

Religious faith has inspired many of our fellow citizens to help build a better Nation. In America today, people of faith continue to wage a determined campaign to meet needs and fight suffering. Through the efforts of the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, my Administration has been working to ensure that faith-inspired organizations do not face discrimination simply because of their religious orientation. I recently signed an Executive Order to ensure equal treatment for faith-based charities that are offering hope to those in need.

As we celebrate the freedom of faith in America, we also recognize that there are many people around the world who do not enjoy such freedoms. The right to believe and express one’s beliefs in words and practice is a right that should belong to all people. Through the Department of State’s Office of International Religious Freedom, my Administration has been working to call attention to religious persecution and to encourage our allies, friends, and trading partners to provide and protect this fundamental human right for all people around the world. By working together to secure