

# That They May Worship

by Aaron Matthew Weldon

“The Lord said to Moses, ‘Go to Pharaoh, and say to him, Thus says the Lord, the God of the Hebrews: Let my people go, so that they may worship me’ ” (Ex 9:1, NRS). It’s one of the memorable refrains from one of the greatest stories of liberation in the history—the Exodus of Israel. Moses persistently tells Pharaoh what God demands for the nation enslaved in Egypt, and Pharaoh consistently responds with a hard heart. It’s an amazing, familiar story. Yet we often overlook the reason Moses gives for his demand.

“That they may worship me.” Liberation is bound up with worshipping God and obeying his commandments. Today, the issue is often framed as if people of faith merely want to be left alone. That’s only one side of the matter. People of faith—Catholics, Protestants, Jews, Muslims, and others—are seeking the space to live out their faith, to serve God according to the dictates of their respective traditions.

It’s easy for those of us who care about religious freedom to focus primarily on laws, lawsuits, and government mandates. We rightly want to challenge infringements on religious liberty. But we need to keep in mind that our aim, as people of faith, is not merely the space to live faithfully. The goal is also the actual living out of faith. We are not merely seeking freedom from coercion but freedom for



*People join hands during an interfaith prayer service for peace at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Baltimore. A diverse group of worshippers filled the basilica for the prayer service.*

serving God and others. To live out our faith in daily life, we need to be people of prayer.

A focus on interior renewal is good for its own sake. It also helps promote religious freedom. This most basic freedom for all people requires a culture of prayer, a culture where communities of faith seek to fulfill obligations and respect the rights of others to fulfill their own obligations. This is the kind of culture where the pursuit of holiness and connection with God are understandable. Our current cultural climate presents a challenge. A widespread therapeutic spirituality says that as long as you feel good and do good, everything is fine. Rather than tolerance, we end up with religious indifference. Spiritual renewal in our culture begins

with us. Simply being people of prayer helps build a culture of prayer.

The Church shows us ways that we can grow into people of prayer. A great way to integrate advocacy for the common good and attention to prayer year round is by joining the Call to Prayer for Life, Marriage, and Religious Liberty. In the face of serious challenges, the Lord calls us to sacrifice and pray.

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