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Nuncio endorses Fortnight for Freedom, plans to participate



Italian Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò in October (CNS/Paul Haring)

ATLANTA -- Addressing the U.S. bishops Wednesday morning, Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò, papal nuncio to the United States, endorsed their Fortnight for Freedom and said he plans to participate in observances locally in the Archdiocese of Washington.

The U.S. Catholic church is facing a significant challenge on "the whole question of freedom of religion and conscience," he said.

The fact that the current conflict is taking place "in the context of an election year" makes "interventions even more delicate," he added.

The Fortnight for Freedom is "praiseworthy" and "has my full support," he said.

"May I say unequivocally that the church must speak with one voice," he said. "We all know that the fundamental tactic of the enemy is to show a church divided."

Viganò suggested that the challenges facing the church might serve "providentially, as an invitation to the entire church in the United States, especially among her consecrated religious and in her educational institutions, to take on an attitude of deep communion with the local bishop."

Citing recent papal addresses to groups of U.S. bishops, Viganò said among challenges facing the U.S. church are "growing secularism; religious freedom, the relationship between religion and culture; the contemporary crisis of marriage and the family and of the Christian vision of human sexuality; religious education and faith formation of the next generation; the pastoral response to immigration; and the fostering of Catholic unity."

[Jerry Filteau, *NCR's* Washington correspondent, is in Atlanta for the U.S. bishops' national meeting this week.]

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