

# **Catholic Priest, Parishioners Walk 100 Miles from Hancock to Baltimore to Promote Religious Freedom**

Father John “Jack” Lombardi, Pastor of St. Peter Catholic Church in Hancock, Maryland, and a group of Catholics from the parish and surrounding areas will walk from the Western Maryland parish to the Baltimore Basilica, July 29-August 5, to promote religious freedom.

“This is a pilgrimage of religious freedom to witness to others along the pilgrimage route that Catholics and others are being forced to violate their religious beliefs and their consciences,” Father Lombardi said, referring to the Department of Health and Human Services rule mandating that all employers provide in their employee benefits plans coverage for abortion-inducing drugs, sterilizations and contraceptives.

The group has been preparing for the journey for the past several weeks and includes Catholics of all ages. Several businesses are listed as sponsors on a blog promoting the walk, officially called the Religious Freedom Walk 2012. Those participating are also accepting pledges for every mile traveled, with all money raised going to the St. Vincent de Paul Society in Baltimore and the Interfaith Service Coalition in Hancock.

Participants plan to attend the 4:30 p.m. Mass at the Basilica on Sunday, August 5. For more information, visit [religiousfreedomwalk2012.blogspot.com](http://religiousfreedomwalk2012.blogspot.com).