

# For Purple Mountain Majesties

I rarely have lunchtime plans. So, when my mother and brother invited me to join them — and my nephews and younger son — for the Rally for Religious Freedom at noon March 23, I went. After all, besides my passion for the issue itself, I didn't want to miss Daniel's first rally.

It was marketed as a child-friendly event, though I was a bit skeptical. But Daniel and his cousins enjoyed themselves. There were people with colorful signs. There were dogs panting in the spring sunshine. There were medical helicopters chopping through the sky. There were the usual sirens and other downtown Baltimore noises. There were policemen — and even a police dog. And there was rousing music blaring from the scratchy speakers.

When Daniel's 4-year-old cousin first heard the music, he said, "I want to see the circus!" The circus would have to wait for another day, but there was plenty to see and hear. We all sang "The Star-Spangled Banner." We got to cheer again and again and again. Daniel even wriggled out of my arms so he could stand tall on the pavement and clap at the end of each speech.

Did my 2-year-old understand why we were there? Of course not. But that didn't stop his mother from telling him. I explained to him that we could be there because this is the United States of America. I told him we have the right to stand up for what we believe even when it's not popular, or when we are criticizing our nation's leaders.

What I didn't tell my son is that he couldn't do this in his homeland. I also didn't tell him that part of the reason I feel compelled to speak up against the HHS Mandate is that when his father and I started down the path to international adoption, we gained a new appreciation for the freedoms we celebrate in our country. As Americans, we are not restricted by a one-child policy. Government policies don't force us to make heart-wrenching decisions about family planning — decisions that tear families apart, even as new families are formed through adoption. As Americans, we can practice our faith in public and with pride. That is sacred not just

to us as Roman Catholics, but to all Americans.

So, Daniel, who has been a U.S. citizen since our plane landed in the U.S. last summer, and I were there to be counted. One day he may look at the picture of him standing in Hopkins Plaza and ask what we were doing. I'll tell him.

We were there to make sure our voices were heard.

We were there because someone needs to speak up for freedom.

And we were there because while you're singing about purple mountain majesties, you can pray for mountains to be moved.

And that's one of the joys of being an American.