

# **Portion of Saint John Paul II's Bloodstained Cassock from 1981 Assassination Attempt to be Displayed During Religious Freedom Mass in Baltimore**

*Major relic is part of nationwide tour sponsored by Knights of Columbus and the Saint John Paul II National Shrine in Washington, D.C.*

A portion of the bloodstained cassock worn by Pope John Paul II during the attempt on his life in 1981 will be on display at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary during tomorrow evening's national opening Mass of the Fortnight for Freedom, celebrated by Archbishop William E. Lori, Archbishop of Baltimore and Chairman of the U.S. Bishops' Ad hoc Committee for Religious Liberty.

The relic, which will be displayed during the Mass alongside a portrait of the late Pope and newest Saint of the Catholic Church, will be available for public veneration immediately following the liturgy. The Mass, which begins at 5:30 p.m., marks the kickoff of the Catholic Church's national religious liberty initiative, Fortnight for Freedom.

Pope John Paul II's visit to Poland and his defense of human rights and religious freedom are widely considered key elements in the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe. He also spoke about the tradition of religious freedom in the United States during his October 1995 visit to Baltimore.

Bishops throughout the country have been urged to arrange special events to highlight the importance of defending religious freedom. Catholic churches across the Archdiocese of Baltimore will host education events and volunteer service opportunities during the Fortnight. A complete list of events is available [here](#).

Earlier today, Pope Francis spoke about the importance of preserving religious freedom, saying it “is not simply freedom of thought or private worship. It is the freedom to live according to ethical principles, both privately and publicly, consequent to the truth one has found.”