



## THE AGENCY FOR PUBLIC INFORMATION

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### **MAY 21 DECLARED PUBLIC HOLIDAY - NATIONAL SPIRITUAL BAPTIST DAY**

St Vincent and the Grenadines became only the second country in the Caribbean to declare a National Holiday for the Spiritual Baptist Faith.

The historic Bill was just passed in Parliament. The Parliament was unanimous on the passage of the Bill as support came from both sides of the House of Assembly.

Prime Minister Dr. Ralph Gonsalves said the persecution suffered by Spiritual Baptists for more than fifty years during colonialism warrants the righting of an historic wrong and a celebration of the Spiritual Baptist Faith.

The colonial government on October 1, 1912 outlawed the Spiritual Baptist religion through the Shakerism Prohibition Ordinance. This made it illegal for members to practice their faith and they suffered years of persecution.

The law was repealed on March 22, 1965 by the E. T Joshua-led Legislative Council which passed Ordinance Number 7 of 1965 to remove the 1912 legal ban.

However, May 21, 1951 is being observed by Spiritual Baptist as their Liberation Day following the victory of a court case where they were represented by Former Premier Robert Milton Cato.

On March 28, 2002, Parliament passed the Spiritual Baptist (Official Recognition of Freedom to Worship Day) Act, 2002 (Number 13 of 2002).

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