



Focus on Religious Freedom

Some Concerns Communicated in the USCCB's *Report on the State of Religious Liberty in the United States* Have Already Been Validated

The bishop's report, issued on Jan. 16, 2024, looked at many areas of possible problems for 1st Amendment religious freedom going forward and the effects which could reach to Catholics and people of every faith. In recent news are examples of their apprehensions becoming reality.

Feb. 11, 2024: An armed person entered Lakewood Church in Houston and began firing at worshippers. The attacker was killed by security personnel, but two other people were shot, including the attacker's son.

Feb. 15, 2024: A statue of the Blessed Mother holding the Infant Jesus was vandalized with what looks like hammer blows to the face. The statue stands at the Washington D.C. Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception.

Feb. 19, 2024: At the National Shrine of St. John Neumann in Philadelphia there are stained glass windows with scenes from the saint's life. Three of the windows had panes shattered by rocks and stones thrown from outside per the security cameras.

Feb. 25, 2024: A letter from the St. Thoms More Legal Society, which is defending pro-life activist, Lauren Handy, advises that Lauren, who has been convicted of an offense under the FACE Act, will be sentenced on May 14 and could be sent to prison for 11 years. The bishops' report explains that the FACE Act was intended to protect abortion facilities, churches and pro-life clinics but has never been used except to charge pro-life demonstrators and sentence them to extreme penalties for peaceful, non-violent actions.

The bishops' report discusses many areas where religious freedom has been diminished and other impending government mandates that would greatly damage every American's ability to practice their faith. The charism of the laity is to bring these issues into the public square and stand for the morality which our founders knew was the only sure protection of our liberties.

Connect with the USCCB's Committee for Religious Liberty to receive Action Alerts and the latest updates on current religious freedom issues. <http://tinyurl.com/4brtsyjt>

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“Those who deny religious freedom seek to end the influence of faith and morals in our society. As Catholics, our actions must make it clear, we will not surrender our religious liberty.”

- William F. Murphy, Bishop-Emeritus; Diocese of Rockville Centre