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## Focus on Religious Freedom

### The Joy of Christmas Draws Us Closer to Our Infant King and Our Fellow Man

***“Mankind is a great, an immense family... This is proved by what we feel in our hearts at Christmas.” - Pope John Paul XXIII***

Each year in the USA there are organizations, individuals and government officials who would ban or restrict the celebration of Christmas. Already this year an administrator in a Wisconsin city has informed employees that decorations this December should avoid red and green colors and religious themes because she sees that as unwelcoming and not inclusive.

Meanwhile, churches, town squares, parks and other public forum areas are being readied for the celebration of Christmas and the marking of other faiths' celebrations as well. Since the principles of religious freedom prevent the cultural majority from using the power of the state to impose their beliefs on others, both religious and nonreligious alike, the government cannot become so powerful that it can tell people what to think and how to act. <sup>(1)</sup> This is especially important to know during the Christmas/Hanukkah holiday.

"The U.S. Supreme Court and numerous federal appeals courts have recognized that government entities may recognize Christmas as a holiday and may maintain Christmas displays that include both religious and secular symbols." <sup>(1)</sup>

"Publicly sponsored Nativity scenes on public property are constitutional, especially when the display includes other secular symbols of the holiday. In fact, removing only the religious symbols of the holiday display would demonstrate hostility toward religion, which the First Amendment forbids," said Liberty Counsel. <sup>(2)</sup>

For many years residents and visitors to New York City have been inspired by a life-size nativity scene in Central Park, on a piece of public property in front of the Plaza Hotel on 5th Ave. The Catholic League has erected this display for decades. Their president, Bill Donohue, has taught us that a public forum, a place that is open to all ideas, concerts, artistic exhibitions, etc., cannot stop them from erecting the creche.

([learningforjustice.org](http://learningforjustice.org); [religiousfreedominstitute.org](http://religiousfreedominstitute.org), 11/1/19; [heritage.org](http://heritage.org) (1); [usccb.org](http://usccb.org), [libertycounsel.org](http://libertycounsel.org), 4/1/21(2))

***“God never gives someone a gift they are not capable of receiving. If He gives us the gift of Christmas, it is because we all have the ability to understand and receive it.”***  
***- Pope Francis***

