



Focus on Religious Freedom

The Next American Awakening

"We are now standing in the face of the greatest historical confrontation humanity has gone through. I do not think that wide circles of the American society or wide circles of the Christian community realize this fully. We are now facing the final confrontation between the Church and the anti-Church, of the Gospel versus the anti-Gospel,"

Cardinal Karol Wojtyla, future Pope John Paul II,
Philadelphia, PA, Eucharistic Congress, August 1-8, 1976.

Many people say there has never been a harder time in the United States to be a Christian because our First Freedoms - Freedom of Religion and Freedom of Speech - are so frequently under attack by secularism that repudiates ancient Christian teachings about life, marriage and family. These losses of heritage and hope could be restored by heeding the words of those who are new converts to the Christian faith, "I wanted what they had." ⁽¹⁾

These converts cite three main characteristics of Christians that attract them:

1. They are "witnesses to beauty and truth, in an age when these precious commodities are undervalued - an age in which some of the most vaunted academic institutions on earth deny they even exist."
 2. Since religious illiteracy is rising, and so many have never read scripture, these converts look to Christians and their public example to learn what it means to be "Christian." A passage in Hebrews says, "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers for thereby some have entertained angels unaware."
 3. One of the features that set Christianity apart from the very beginning was the selfless caring for others that set into motion what many call the first great awakening - the turn to Christianity by pagan Rome. Telling of how Christians behaved during the plague in 312-313 A.D, a Greek historian wrote, "All day long some of them (Christians) tended to the dying and to their burial, countless numbers with no one to care for them." ⁽²⁾
- This distinguishing charity made a lasting impression on the pagans of yesterday and has the power to do the same today. **St. Francis of Assisi told us, "The deeds you do may be the only sermon some people will hear today."**

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The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) has launched The National Eucharistic Revival to renew the Church by enkindling a living relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist that invites all people to experience the Christian faith and to say, "I wanted what they have."(3)