



Focus on Religious Freedom

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Safety in Our Houses of Worship

First Concern in Bishops' Report on the "State of Religious Liberty in the United States."

The physical safety of all Americans in their chosen house of worship is a concern pointed out in the Bishops' report on religious liberty. In the U.S. over 340 instances of arson and vandalism have damaged Catholic churches, shrines, statues and monuments since 2020.

After the Supreme Court decision overturned Roe v Wade as having no foundation in our Federal Constitution and determined that it was the right of each state to decide abortion issues, attacks on Catholic churches and pro-life centers increased significantly.

The Bishops' report noted that increasing antisemitic and anti-Muslim biases could result in attacks on mosques and temples. The Bishops report was released in Jan. 2024, after the Oct. 7 attack on Israel and before some of the most violent and extreme demonstrations against Israel and Jews across America. The encampments and the disruptions of campuses and the barring of Jewish students from attending classes validates the safety concerns present even before Oct. 7.

Other issues brought out in the report include federal agencies twisting laws to encourage abortions when the law was intended to help pregnant women, the failure of federal agencies to find and prosecute those attacking churches and the FBI's covert investigation of Catholics who attend the Traditional Latin Mass.

Our Declaration of Independence states: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal...that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights, among them are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. *That to preserve these rights, Governments are instituted among men deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.*"

We citizens have instituted local, state and federal governments with the authority and the corresponding responsibility to preserve and protect Americans' rights as put forth in the Constitution and Bill of Rights. The First Amendment protects religious freedom, freedom of speech, freedom of press, the right to peaceably assemble and to petition the government for redress of grievances. As Catholics and citizens we expect our government to preserve our rights. When the government fails in its designated responsibilities, we are obliged to correct that malfeasance by our prayers, our voices and our choice of leaders.

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