



Focus on Religious Freedom

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Pope Francis

December 17, 1936 – April 21, 2025; Requiescat in Pace

Pope Francis' Teachings about Religious Freedom

“In today’s world, religious freedom is more often affirmed than put into practice.” Defending religious liberty “guarantees the growth and development of the entire community.” – June 8, 2013

“When, in the name of an ideology, there is an attempt to remove God from society, it ends up adoring idols, and very soon men and women lose their way, their dignity is trampled and their rights violated.” – Sept. 23, 2014

“American Catholics are committed to building a society which is truly tolerant and inclusive, to safeguarding the rights of individuals and communities, and to rejecting every form of unjust discrimination. With countless other people of good will, they are likewise concerned that efforts to build a just and wisely ordered society respect their deepest concerns and their right to religious liberty. That freedom remains one of America’s most precious possessions. And, as my brothers, the United States Bishops, have reminded us, all are called to be vigilant, precisely as good citizens, to preserve and defend that freedom from everything that would threaten or compromise it.” – Sept. 23, 2015 Pope Francis at the White House

“Let us preserve freedom. Let us cherish freedom. Freedom of conscience, religious freedom, the freedom of each person, each family, each people, which is what gives rise to rights.” “[May] you defend these rights, especially your religious freedom, for it has been given to you by God himself.” – September 25, 2015 Pope Francis at Independence Hall, Philadelphia

There is, however, also “another kind of persecution that is not often spoken about”, Francis noted. The first form of persecution “is due to confessing the name of Christ” and it is thus “a clear, explicit type of persecution”. The other kind of persecution is “disguised as culture, disguised as modernity, disguised as progress: it is a kind of — I would say somewhat ironically — polite persecution”. You can recognize “when someone is persecuted not for confessing Christ’s name, but for wanting to demonstrate the values of the Son of God”. Thus, it is a kind of “persecution against God the Creator in the person of his children”. – April 12, 2016

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