

AUSTRALIA'S WAR ON CHRISTIAN KIDS

If it weren't for Cardinal George Pell, it would not matter a whole lot to the Catholic League if a free nation like Australia decided to emulate the totalitarian regime in North Korea. But he does matter, and that is why we are concerned. He has been the target of character assassins for a very long time, and will appear in a Melbourne court on October 6. Judging from recent events, it seems near impossible for him to get a fair trial.

Queensland, Australia's second largest state, declared war on Christian children last week: they have been told to stop talking about Jesus in the school yard. Christmas cards that refer to the birth of Jesus have been banned, as have creating Christmas tree decorations. Beaded bracelets that share "the good news about Jesus" have also been prohibited.

"Christians, prepare for persecution." That is the conclusion of Australian journalist Andrew Bolt. "I am not a Christian," he says, "but am amazed that your bishops and ministers are not warning you of what is already breaking over your heads." Bolt is correct. Cowardice in the face of oppression never works, yet this lesson has not been learned by many Catholic and Protestant leaders.

Anti-Christian bigotry in Australia is widespread. Bolt notes that just last week "two Christian preachers were summoned to Tasmania's Anti-Discrimination Tribunal for preaching their faith's stand on traditional marriage and homosexuality." Two years ago, Hobart Archbishop Julian Porteous, Australia's most outspoken Catholic defender of the faith, was ordered to explain to the authorities "by what right he spoke against same-sex marriage."

Australian journalist Bill Muehlenberg has written a splendid column, "The Ongoing War on Christianity in Australia," that details the extent of censorship being enforced throughout the nation. He references an article that he wrote in 2015 about the crackdown on religious speech in the Australian state of Victoria, home to Cardinal Pell's trial. Those policies went after the kids, banning the singing of Christmas hymns.

As usual, the gag orders are motivated by a libertine conception of freedom. Pro-life demonstrators have had their rights abridged, and all discourse that is not deemed gay friendly is subject to censorship.

If this were simply an anti-Christian phobia, it might not matter too much. But it is much more than that. It is cultural fascism sponsored by the state.

In 2012, the late Chicago archbishop, Cardinal Francis George, noted the increasingly hostile milieu for Christian expression in America. He said that while he expected to die in bed, "my successor will die in prison and his successor will die a martyr in the public square."

Looks like Cardinal George's prediction is proceeding at a gallop pace in Australia. It does not bode well for Cardinal Pell—the cultural climate is poisonous to Catholics.