

KEY UNALIENABLE RIGHTS THREATENED

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on the latest attacks on Christianity:

Last week, the U.S. State Department released its “Report of the Commission on Unalienable Rights.” The distinguished panel of experts, chaired by Harvard Law professor Mary Ann Glendon, gave prominence to the role that religious liberty plays in the making of a free society. “Foremost among the unalienable rights that government is established to secure, from the founders’ point of view, are property rights and religious liberty.”

Regrettably, property rights and religious liberty are threatened today, both at home and abroad. News stories from the past few days show that Christians are having to endure attacks on both of these key rights.

The Christian Post reports that Christians are being forced to renounce their faith in Communist China and that displays of Jesus must be replaced with pictures of Mao Zedong and President Xi Jinping. The cult of the personality, especially of Mao, the genocidal tyrant, was once a staple in China, but those norms were relaxed for many years. Now they are back with a vengeance.

Open Doors, which monitors religious persecution of Christians worldwide, ranks Pakistan as one of the worst nations in the world for Christians to live. According to the Daily Express, a British media outlet, Christian churches are now being told to remove crosses from their churches in Pakistan. Why? Because Muslims are complaining.

The New York Times reports that a fire engulfed the Cathedral of St. Peter and St. Paul in the western French city of

Nantes. The Gothic church's organ and stained-glass windows were badly damaged. The fire is being investigated as the work of arsonists.

A statue of Jesus was beheaded at a Catholic church in South Florida. According to ABC News, this incident at Good Shepherd Catholic Church in West Kendall is being investigated by the Miami-Dade police and the Department of Homeland Security. A spokesperson for the Archdiocese of Miami, Mary Ross Agosta, saw this for what it was. "This is not only private property, it is sacred property."

The New Haven Register has a story on what vandals did to St. Joseph's Church in New Haven. "Satanic" and "anarchist" symbols were found on the church's door. This was not the work of some drunken teenagers.

Chris Churchill at the Times-Union did a fine story on Pastor John Koletas from Lansingburgh, New York. Unlike the vandals, the head of the Grace Baptist Church did not deface religious symbols. But he did engage in hate speech against many demographic groups, including Catholics. He called the pope "the most evil man in the world" and blamed Catholics for causing the Civil War. Catholics also partake in alcohol (which he said was promoted by "satan") and are a "bunch of child molesters."

Why now? Why are we seeing a crackdown on Christianity abroad, and a rash of violence against Christian churches at home? Christianity has always been a threat to communists and to Islamists, so periodic assaults on it are nothing new. The attacks in the United States are more a reflection of the hate-filled environment that marks our nation at the current time.

If there is one common denominator between these two parallel phenomena at home and abroad it is the conviction that Christianity stands in the way of reconstructing society. This

sociological observation is correct.

What joins the communists in China, the Islamists in the Middle East, and the anarchists in the United States is the quest for total control of society. They cannot achieve that end without leveling Christianity, which is why they must be resisted. We cannot allow our unalienable rights to be destroyed by totalitarians.