

POPE FRANCIS DEFENDS RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Calling religious freedom “one of America’s most precious possessions,” Pope Francis pointedly embraced the efforts of American Catholics, led by their bishops, to defend religious freedom against government encroachment.

The Holy Father spoke following President Obama’s welcoming address at the White House. The president, while detailing the horrific persecution of Christians and others in various parts of the world, made no mention of domestic attacks on religious freedom being perpetrated by his own administration, such as the HHS mandate requiring religious entities to cover abortion-inducing drugs, or family-owned businesses being forced to participate in same-sex wedding ceremonies.

Pope Francis made clear that the protection of religious freedom is a vital concern to Catholics in America.

“With their fellow citizens,” he said, “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,” he said, “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.”