



Focus on Religious Freedom

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2020 Ends: With No End to Discrimination Against Religious Freedom

"Of course, there are dangers in religious freedom and freedom of opinion. But to deny these rights is worse than dangerous, it is absolutely fatal to liberty."

- President Harry S. Truman

San Francisco, CA: As new restrictions are imposed on churches that will now ban indoor worship services in some counties, Abp. Salvatore Cordileone said, "Worship is both a natural and a Constitutional right. My people want to receive the Body and Blood of Christ; they need it, and have every right to be free to do so."⁽¹⁾ The new health order treats religious worship as a "non-essential" activity, while allowing hair & nail salons, massage parlors, and tattoo parlors to remain open. The Archbishop criticized the government for "demoting worship" and further said, "But the government still chooses to treat worship as less important than shopping for shoes."⁽²⁾

However, in May, 2020, Pres. Trump said, "Today, I am identifying houses of worship, churches, synagogues, and mosques, as essential places that provide essential services."⁽³⁾

Mississippi: A 3rd grade girl was banned from wearing her "Jesus Loves Me" mask even though "Other students within the school district have freely worn masks with logos of sports teams or even the words 'Black Lives Matter,'" said an Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF) attorney.⁽⁴⁾ School administrators forced her to remove the mask because it had a "religious message."⁽⁵⁾

The school's action was a clear violation of the U.S. Department of Education's Guidance on students' religious freedom which states: "Students may display religious messages on items of clothing to the same extent that they are permitted to display other comparable messages."⁽⁶⁾

"Public schools have a duty to respect the free expression of students that the First Amendment guarantees to them. ... No public school student should be singled out for peacefully sharing her religious beliefs with fellow students," said ADF counsel.⁽⁷⁾

Kentucky: A Federal Appeals Court recently overturned a lower court's decision that declared Gov. Andy Beshear cannot order private religious schools to stop in-person instruction to prevent the spread of Covid-19. This lower court (U.S. District judge) said the First Amendment protects religious schools' right to make decisions without government interference. "If social distancing is good enough for offices, colleges, and universities within the Commonwealth, it is good enough for religious K-12 schools that benefit from Constitutional protections."⁽⁸⁾

However, the new ruling from the Federal Appeals Court stated, "We are not in a position to second-guess the governor's determination regarding the health & safety of the Commonwealth at this point in time."⁽⁹⁾ thereby denying First Amendment protections to religious schools.

The Kentucky Attorney General who supports First Amendment protections, said, "...we're already hard at work to take this matter to the U.S. Supreme Court."⁽¹⁰⁾

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"Necessity is the plea for every infringement of human freedom. It is the argument of tyrants; it is the creed of slaves. – William Pitt