



Written by [Steven Neill](#) on December 30, 2020

## Trump Commemorates Death of Thomas Becket With Religious Freedom Proclamation

In yet another example of his unwavering concern for religious freedom and steadfast support for the most persecuted religion on earth, [Christianity](#), President Trump released a proclamation yesterday calling for an end to worldwide religious oppression on the 850th anniversary of the martyrdom of English Archbishop Thomas Becket in 1170.

The proclamation begins:

Today is the 850th anniversary of the martyrdom of Saint Thomas Becket on December 29, 1170. Thomas Becket was a statesman, a scholar, a chancellor, a priest, an archbishop, and a lion of religious liberty.

Before the Magna Carta was drafted, before the right to free exercise of religion was enshrined as America's first freedom in our glorious Constitution, Thomas gave his life so that, as he said, "the Church will attain liberty and peace."



AP Images

Born around 1118 A.D., Thomas Becket was a bright and charismatic man who became close [friends](#) with English King Henry II after serving as his chancellor. When Theobald of Bec, Archbishop of Canterbury, died in 1161, King Henry put Becket in his place. Their friendship, however, became strained when Becket refused to allow Henry to [dominate](#) the church and try clergy accused of crimes in English courts instead of church tribunals.

Becket fled England for France to escape Henry's wrath, where he stayed for the next six years. Upon his return, the tensions between Becket and Henry soured once again. In a fit of rage, Henry reportedly cried out, "What miserable [drones and traitors](#) have I nourished and brought up in my household, who let their lord be treated with such shameful contempt by a low-born cleric?" After this, four knights confronted and murdered Becket. Three years after his death for defending the rights of the church against the overreaching King Henry, Becket was [canonized](#) as a martyr by the Catholic Church.

President Trump's proclamation continued:

Thomas Becket's death serves as a powerful and timeless reminder to every American that our freedom from religious persecution is not a mere luxury or accident of history, but



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rather an essential element of our liberty. It is our priceless treasure and inheritance. And it was bought with the blood of martyrs.

As Americans, we were first united by our belief that “rebellion to tyrants is obedience to God” and that defending liberty is more important than life itself. If we are to continue to be the land of the free, no government official, no governor, no bureaucrat, no judge, and no legislator must be allowed to decree what is orthodox in matters of religion or to require religious believers to violate their consciences. No right is more fundamental to a peaceful, prosperous, and virtuous society than the right to follow one’s religious convictions. As I declared in Krasiński Square in Warsaw, Poland, on July 6, 2017, the people of America and the people of the world still cry out: “We want God.”

On this day, we celebrate and revere Thomas Becket’s courageous stand for religious liberty, and we reaffirm our call to end religious persecution worldwide. In my historic address to the United Nations last year, I made clear that America stands with believers in every country who ask only for the freedom to live according to the faith that is within their own hearts. I also stated that global bureaucrats have absolutely no business attacking the sovereignty of nations that wish to protect innocent life, reflecting the belief held by the United States and many other countries that every child — born and unborn — is a sacred gift from God. Earlier this year, I signed an Executive Order to prioritize religious freedom as a core dimension of United States foreign policy. We have directed every Ambassador — and the over 13,000 United States Foreign Service officers and specialists — in more than 195 countries to promote, defend, and support religious freedom as a central pillar of American diplomacy.

We pray for religious believers everywhere who suffer persecution for their faith. We especially pray for their brave and inspiring shepherds — like Cardinal Joseph Zen of Hong Kong and Pastor Wang Yi of Chengdu — who are tireless witnesses to hope.

To honor Thomas Becket’s memory, the crimes against people of faith must stop, prisoners of conscience must be released, laws restricting freedom of religion and belief must be repealed, and the vulnerable, the defenseless, and the oppressed must be protected. The tyranny and murder that shocked the conscience of the Middle Ages must never be allowed to happen again. As long as America stands, we will always defend religious liberty.

A society without religion cannot prosper. A nation without faith cannot endure — because justice, goodness, and peace cannot prevail without the grace of God.

The president’s comments come as governments worldwide have seized on the COVID-19 “pandemic” to suppress the Christian church or increase the [persecution](#) against it.

In an interview with Breitbart, David Curry, leader of the Christian aid organization Open Doors, said concerning [India](#):

We have reports of Christian nurses who are being scheduled to work with the most contagious because they are considered dispensable and lower than people of other faiths. These kinds of reports are flooding in, and that’s why we want to draw attention to it because I think it yet again highlights the issues around persecution and how difficult it is for Christians and for other religious minorities in other kinds of circumstances.



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Open Doors reports this about what is happening now in [Nigeria](#):

The coronavirus has brought fresh difficulties to Nigeria's Christians. They have been the target of opportunist attacks in lockdown — in April, multiple attacks by militants on villages in the Middle Belt region led to the tragic deaths of 32 believers. The country's economy has been hit. Official aid is being distributed, but Christians in central and northern Nigeria are often last in line to benefit from government food and aid simply because of their faith, and there is little hope of getting a job.

Christians are being persecuted in other nations as well, according to [Open Doors](#), including Vietnam, the Gulf region, Ethiopia, the Philippines, Bangladesh, and Malaysia. But the most systemic persecution of religions, including Christianity, is happening in [China](#).

According to [Breitbart](#),

The economic downturn caused by the coronavirus pandemic has hit China's low-income households hardest, many of which rely upon state-funded welfare benefits to survive. In recent months, the CCP has reportedly forced Christians across the country receiving state-funded welfare benefits to remove religious symbols from their households and replace them with images of Chinese President Xi Jinping and Mao Zedong; some are told to renounce their faith altogether. If Christians refuse, the state cancels their welfare payments, according to the magazine [[Bitter Winter](#)].

In an October 22 interview with ShareAmerica, former Senator and current [U.S. Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom](#) Sam Brownback [stated](#),

We share reports — that others make — that Chinese authorities have subjected prisoners of conscience, including Falun Gong, [Uyghurs](#), Tibetan Buddhists, and underground [Christians](#), to forcible organ harvesting. This should shock everyone's conscience.

In the United States, lawmakers have closed [churches](#) and restricted [worship](#) in the name protecting people from COVID-19.

According to American Pastor Andrew Brunson, a missionary to Turkey for two decades, this is only the beginning of what he sees coming for Christians in the near future. According to [CBNNews](#), Pastor Brunson spoke at a recent [Global Prayer for U.S. Election Integrity](#) event, saying,

I believe the pressures that we're seeing in our country now are going to increase, and one of these pressures is going to be hostility toward people who embrace Jesus Christ and his teaching, who are not ashamed to stand for him. My concern is that we're not ready for this pressure. And not being prepared is very, very dangerous on a number of levels....

Whoever ends up prevailing in this election, I believe that persecution is still coming, and it's coming quickly, and it's coming soon. So, if President Trump prevails, it will delay persecution at a government level, but this will not keep us from the hostility that's rising in our society toward followers of Jesus.

And I want to mention here that Jesus was the most loving, kind person in history, and yet



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he was called evil, and people are not going to just disagree with us. They will say that we are evil, and they will justify everything they do to us because they will paint us as evil people.

What is heavy on my heart is that we need to prepare ourselves, to prepare our own hearts.



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