



Canada's Federal Election and the Catholic Church:

Educate, Reflect, Act

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM PROTECTING PERSECUTED CHRISTIANS

The Easter Sunday, terrorist attack that targeted Sri Lankan hotels and Catholic churches shocked people from around the world. However, as surprising as it may be for Canadians, Christians and their places of worship are common victims of violence.

Catholics stand with all faith traditions in denouncing religious discrimination and persecution. Pope John Paul II, who witnessed religious persecution first hand in Soviet-controlled Poland, wrote, "Certainly the curtailment of the religious freedom of individuals and communities is not only a painful experience but it is above all an attack on man's very dignity." (*Redemptor Hominis*, No. 17)

MORE ABOUT PROTECTING PERSECUTED CHRISTIANS ON REVERSE

FACTS

- Christians are the victims of 75% of the world's religiously-motivated violence, making Christians the most persecuted religious group on Earth.
- 1,847 churches and other Christian buildings were attacked worldwide in 2018.
- 1-in-7 Christians experience persecution globally.



QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION BEFORE YOU VOTE ON OCTOBER 21, 2019:

- How can the Canadian government help persecuted Christians around the world?
- What could limit religious freedom in Canada? What can Canadians do to protect their religious freedom?

OUR SOCIAL TEACHING TELLS US...

“We must not be afraid of being Christian and living as Christians! We must have this courage to go and proclaim the Risen Christ, for he is our peace; he made peace with his love, with his forgiveness, with his blood and with his mercy.”

—*Pope Francis, April 7, 2013*

“Blessed are you when people revile and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

—*Matthew 5:11-12*

“Religious freedom, an essential requirement of the dignity of every person, is a cornerstone of the structure of human rights, and for this reason an irreplaceable factor in the good of individuals and of the whole of society [...] It follows that the freedom of individuals and of communities to profess and practice their religion is an essential element for peaceful human co-existence.”

—*Pope John Paul II, Jan. 1, 1988*

PROTECTING PERSECUTED CHRISTIANS

Sadly, 327 million Christians live in countries marked by religious persecution. In pure numbers, Christians are the most persecuted religious group on Earth. Some notable examples include:

- More than 2.5 million Christians have been forced from their homes in Iraq and Syria over the past 15 years, putting in doubt the future of some of Christianity's oldest communities.
- Pakistani Christians are considered second-class citizens and are regularly accused of violating anti-blasphemy laws, which carry a death sentence.
- Nigeria has one of the largest Christian populations in the world but the faithful suffer at the hands of armed militants.
- In Laos (just west of Vietnam), only state-approved churches can operate legally and those churches are subject to frequent inspections, parishioners are monitored and Christians have been arrested.

Canadian Christians must defend our religious liberties as well as the freedoms of other faith communities. Earlier this year, the National Assembly of Quebec removed a crucifix that had been present in the assembly since the 1930's and passed Bill 21 which prohibits civil servants from wearing religious symbols while at work (such as crucifixes, turbans and hijabs). The law is more restrictive on Muslims and Sikhs but Catholics should join in solidarity with other faiths when their religious freedom is threatened, just as we should protect our right to express our beliefs publicly without discrimination.

Want to attend a debate
with 1,000 Catholics or
learn more about other issues
leading up to the
October 21, 2019 election?

Visit [www.archtoronto.org/
election](http://www.archtoronto.org/election) for more details.



Archdiocese
of Toronto

www.archtoronto.org

#CatholicVote2019

Content created in partnership with
Catholic Charities (Toronto) and Novalis