

COUNTDOWN TO THE COMING PERSECUTION

Rev. Joseph M. Esper - July 2012

One of the greatest and most famous Catholic religious leaders in American history, the late Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen, once warned, “The acceptance of the fullness of Truth will have the unfortunate quality of making you hated by the world. . . . If the grace of God did not give me the fullness of Truth, and I were looking for it, I would begin my search by looking through the world for a Church that did not get along with the evil in the world! If that Church [were] accused of countless lies, hated because it refused to compromise, ridiculed because it refused to fit the times and not all time, I would suspect that since it was hated by what is evil in the world, it was therefore good and holy; and if it is good and holy, it must be Divine.”

When the Archbishop wrote these words several decades ago, his intent was to offer one more reason why Catholicism is the true and complete version of Christianity, and the point he makes is a valid one: one of the signs of the True Church is its knack for attracting persecution. Satan recognizes his most dangerous enemy, and thus unleashes the full force of his attacks upon her. Here in the United States this truth has always been more abstract or theoretical than actual, but that situation is changing—making Archbishop Sheen’s words not only an apology or defense of the Catholic Faith, but also a prediction of a new and frightening stage of her existence in our homeland.

More than anytime in memory, we as Catholics and Christians are hated and opposed in our own country—and a number of Church leaders are finally sounding the alarm. According to Bishop Daniel Jenky of Peoria, Illinois, “The intensity of hatred against Catholic Christianity in elements of our culture is just astounding. . . . We are under assault.” Cardinal Raymond Burke has stated, “[There] is a war [between] a culture of secularization which is quite strong in our nation,” and “the Christian culture which has marked the life of the United States during the first 200 years of its history.” Unfortunately, most people don’t fully realize this; in the words of Archbishop Jose Gomez, “We are slowly losing our sense of religious liberty in America.” Moreover, in mid-April the Ad Hoc Committee for Religious Liberty of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops issued a document, “Our Most Cherished Liberty,” which states: “As Catholic bishops and American citizens, we address an urgent summons to our fellow Catholics and fellow Americans to be on guard, for religious liberty is under attack, both at home and abroad.”

Our culture has been conditioned to accept, often in the name of “tolerance,” unholy behavior and attitudes previous generations of Americans would have rejected outright. However, religious tolerance for Catholics and other traditional, Bible-believing Christians is not included in this new mindset or paradigm; instead, for several decades the culture has been turning increasingly against us. That’s why Pope Benedict XVI, in an address to American bishops last November, said, “The seriousness of the challenges which the Church in America, under your leadership, is called to confront in the near

future cannot be underestimated. . . . The obstacles to Christian faith and practice raised by a secularized culture also affect the lives of believers.” The Holy Father’s words are especially timely in light of the “contraceptive mandate” the Department of Health and Human Services now seeks to impose on Catholic hospitals, universities, and other religious employers, along with individual business owners morally opposed to abortion, contraception, and sterilization. If this mandate stands, it will run roughshod over the First Amendment religious freedom rights of millions of Americans, Catholic and non-Catholic alike. As Cardinal Timothy Dolan of New York said, “Never before have we faced this kind of challenge to our ability to engage in the public square as people of faith and as service providers. If we do not act now, the consequences will be grave.” This warning was echoed by Cardinal Raymond Burke, who stated, “If Christians do not stand strong, give a strong witness and insist on what is right and good for us, both as individuals and society, this secularization will in fact predominate us and it will destroy us.” According to Cardinal Roger Mahony, “I cannot imagine a more direct and frontal attack on freedom of conscience than this ruling today. This decision must be fought against with all the energies the Catholic community can muster.”

Until recently, these words might have seemed unnecessarily alarming or pessimistic—but, tragically, the world in which we grew up is becoming more hostile to Christianity with every passing day; society and government have entered into an informal but quite serious alliance against the Church. America is no longer one nation under God; rather, she is becoming a nation *opposed* to God, one rebelling against religious authority, and, tragically but not surprisingly, one ever more capable of persecuting the children of God. One Catholic leader who has recognized this previously-unthinkable reality is Cardinal Francis George, the Archbishop of Chicago, who somberly predicted, “I will die in bed. My successor will die in prison, and his successor will die a martyr in the public square.”

These blunt words, I believe, do reflect an accurate reading of the signs of the times, for the United States is no longer a land of freedom and a beacon of morality and religious liberty. Many carefully-researched books written over the last ten-to-twenty years have documented the growing assault on the free practice of Christianity in our country, and have warned of a possible religious persecution in America, including Janet Folger’s *The Criminalization of Christianity*, David Limbaugh’s *Persecution*, Rev. Donald Wildmon’s *Speechless: Silencing the Christians*, Donald McAlvany’s *Storm Warning*, and Bill Donohue’s *Secular Sabotage*. My own book *Spiritual Dangers of the 21st Century* devotes several chapters to the subject of a possible persecution of the Church here in the United States. I’ll review a few of the points made in my book, and then present some new information from various resources—including recent private revelations.

Persecutions, whether of religious or political or ethnic groups, generally unfold in five stages. First of all, the targeted group is *stereotyped or stigmatized*, making it an easier victim of bigotry, slander, and abuse. Then the group is *marginalized*, or pushed to the fringes of society, so as to reduce its moral authority and influence, while emphasizing its members’ differences from everyone else. Thirdly, the group is *vilified*, or viciously attacked and blamed for society’s problems and accused of having a secret and sinister agenda. In the fourth stage, the group is *criminalized* by means of legal restrictions upon

its membership and activities. The final stage is one of outright *persecution*, in which members of the group are subject to varying degrees of discrimination, repression, or imprisonment—and sometimes even harsher and more permanent measures. Many commentators claim America is currently in stage three of this process, and rapidly moving into stage four—and there is mounting evidence to support this assertion.

In his book *Speechless: Silencing the Christians*, Rev. Donald Wildmon (a Methodist minister who founded the American Family Association), writes:

For decades, a growing number of the American elite—the people who manage the media and mold the culture, run our great colleges and corporations, and train our lawyers and judges—has been gripped by a growing anger, now becoming a raging envy, against any person, group, church, or institution committed to Christian moral teachings. Like the [ancient] Romans, these people hear Christ’s truth as an accusation. They even see Christ’s love on the cross as their condemnation. And strangely enough, they see Christian families not as witnesses for Christ but as witnesses against them. . . . The coalition of liberal secularists and homosexual activists—let’s call them “homosecularists” for short—have some very real goals that they know they can achieve only by driving Christians out of public life.

This quote from Rev. Wildmon’s book succinctly describes the motivation of many of the contemporary enemies of the Church in America, and examples of the individual battles in their ongoing war on Christianity—sometimes successful, sometimes not—are many. The constitutionally-guaranteed religious rights of Christians are no longer automatically recognized in court; for instance, judges have imposed huge fines and even imprisonment on persons witnessing to Christ in public places, distributing Bibles or religious literature, or simply praying silently but visibly in a courtroom. Local judges or municipal authorities sometimes arbitrarily refuse to allow religious symbols to be displayed in public—on occasion even on privately-owned land. In several states, Catholic Charities has been forced out of the adoption referral ministry because it refuses to allow same-sex couples to adopt; even though this religious principle is in fact backed up by sociological data showing such arrangements are often detrimental to children, society’s insistence on “tolerance” for homosexuals frequently trumps common sense and morality.

Even a partial listing of recent legal and societal assaults on practicing Christians is lengthy and upsetting. For instance, many medical and nursing schools now discriminate against candidates who refuse to participate in abortions or dispense contraceptives. A Catholic employee of the transit authority board in Maryland who, as a private citizen on a cable television talk show, honestly answered a question on his view of homosexuality was afterwards fired by the governor of Maryland. A Christian married couple in New Mexico who owned and operated a photography studio were fined over \$6600 because they politely declined to take photos at the “commitment ceremony” of two lesbians. An employee of Kodak Corporation was fired after 23 years simply because he refused, on moral grounds, to participate in the company’s “Coming Out Day” to celebrate the sexual

orientation of homosexual, bisexual, and transgender employees. A male university student who referred favorably to a book calling homosexual behavior sinful was accused of sexual harassment, and several professors filed formal charges against him.

In addition to individual victims of anti-Christian discrimination, parishes and religious organizations are sometimes targeted, and this trend seems to be growing. A few months ago the federal government for the first time denied a grant to the U.S. bishops' Migration and Refugee Services agency, despite its admirable record in helping victims of human trafficking, because of the Church's refusal to allow or promote abortion. A Baptist church in Montana "guilty" of biblical preaching on marriage was cited by local authorities for failing to register as a "political committee." A church in San Diego renting space at a city recreation center was forced to pay a much higher rate than other community groups. There are many other instances of Christian churches or ministries denied use of public facilities or lands, unfairly burdened with selectively-applied local ordinances or restrictions, or investigated by state agencies because of their religious beliefs or moral principles. Organizations such as the Alliance Defense Fund and the Thomas More Society are vigorously opposing this trend and defending the legal rights of Christians in court, and have won some important victories—but the fact that freedom of religion now has to be defended in court in the first place is deeply worrying.

According to the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights, "For the first time in American history, the *federal* government [emphasis added] has waged war on the First Amendment rights of Roman Catholics. Throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries, there were harsh attacks on the rights of Catholics, but they always emanated from the states and municipalities. In other words, never before has the executive branch in Washington attacked Catholics the way the Obama administration is doing right now" (*Catalyst*, March 2012). The unconstitutional contraceptive mandate is merely the most blatant example of this anti-Catholic animus, but certainly not the only one, and the administration has used a "divide and conquer" approach by appointing pro-abortion Catholics to important positions and expressing support for policies apparently reconcilable with the social justice agenda of many liberal Catholic bishops and lay persons. Growing numbers of Catholics and other Christians are starting to recognize the dangers to their continued religious freedom, and are shaking off their previous passivity—and this is a hopeful sign. However, history suggests that in response to a firestorm of religious and political opposition to its immoral and unconstitutional policies, the Obama administration will only appear to back off or compromise, while in fact looking for a stealthier and more successful means of implementing its agenda.

If an ever-growing and more powerful federal government wanted, in the name of "national security," to monitor and restrict the activities of its citizens—especially committed Christians, political conservatives, and other allegedly dangerous or subversive groups—it would have plenty of resources and tools at its disposal. Ours has become a "surveillance society," with many ominous threats to individual liberty. The pervasive use of RFID chips, high-speed cameras, DNA databases, and the constant monitoring of telephone and computer communications, are robbing us of our privacy. For instance, cell phones can track the owner's location, even when the phone is turned

off. (The battery has to be removed to disable the tracking device.) Now there's a new microchip for cell phones that can track the owner to within a few centimeters of his or her location. Also, Cass Sustein, the Obama administration's so-called "regulatory czar," had previously called for the government to infiltrate social network websites, chat rooms, and message boards for the purpose of censoring so-called "conspiracy theorizing" or other politically incorrect views. The Department of Homeland Security is now monitoring dozens of popular websites such as Facebook and Twitter to collect "personally identifiable information"—data on law-abiding Americans which is then distributed to federal agencies, employees, and contractors with a supposed "need to know." Since Twitter was first launched in 2006, the Library of Congress has archived every single tweet ever sent. There is also a little-known software program called Carrier IQ which is capable of tracking our every electronic move: dialing a phone number, sending or receiving a text message, using a supposedly secure password to order something online or do online banking, and so on. Carrier IQ also monitors your physical location by tracking your cell phone, and even if you're aware of its existence, it's said to be impossible to deactivate.

Such electronic capabilities in the hands of a *trustworthy* government would be frightening enough; the use of these surveillance tools by an arrogant and politically-driven administration willing to trample constitutional safeguards in the pursuit of its goals is extremely dismaying. Will we as Christians long be able to continue proclaiming and practicing our Christian beliefs? What of the federal "hate crimes bill" signed by Mr. Obama soon after his inauguration? One conservative journalist writes, "That law enhances penalties based on the thoughts of the person suspected of committing a crime. While there has not yet been a large-scale crackdown on pastors who preach against homosexuality, there are indicators that such developments could be in the offing." I believe it's almost certain that in the next two or three years—especially if Obama wins reelection—widespread "sting" operations will take place, in which gay or lesbian couples come to a church office and demand the parish make arrangements for them to be married. When Catholic and other Christian pastors refuse, they'll be taken to court, found guilty of violating the homosexuals' civil rights, and subjected to heavy fines—or worse.

Along with this, members of the pro-life movement—many of whom have already experienced vicious opposition and restrictions on their civil rights—will undergo even greater attacks; almost certainly, they'll be labeled "domestic terrorists" and treated accordingly. In fact, in 2009 the Department of Homeland Security warned of potential civil unrest by persons dedicated to a single issue, such as abortion, along with anyone regularly listening to talk radio or using internet news websites. Executive orders now on the books would allow the president to suspend civil liberties and declare almost anyone an enemy of the state, allowing the confiscation of all his or her property and assets. Moreover, the National Defense Authorization Act signed by Mr. Obama this past Dec. 31 is something of a Trojan horse in terms of undermining our constitutional rights. According to one commentator, "For weeks prior to its passage by both House and Senate and Obama's signing it into law, critics warned that buried within the 1,844-page

bill was the legal authority for the president to send American citizens to jail without charges, without trial, without end. . . . voices from across the political spectrum expressed concern that the law opens the door for the military—led by the president as commander-in-chief—to indefinitely detain American citizens, even within the U.S.” Also, according to one report, “There [are] over 800 prison camps in the United States, all fully operational and ready to receive prisoners. . . . These camps are to be operated by FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) should Martial Law need to be implemented. . . .”

The pieces of the puzzle are fitting together, and the emerging picture is quite ominous. These fears are also borne out by numerous contemporary private revelations which speak of a coming persecution. At this time I want to share some of these alleged visions and messages with you, using revelations supposedly given to five different messengers, some of them personally known to me. The first involves a priest in Michigan, who was reportedly given a warning three years ago by St. Therèse of Lisieux, who told him, “In a short time, what took place in my native country [a reference to the religious persecution accompanying the French Revolution], will take place in yours. The persecution of the Church is imminent. Prepare yourself.” Another contemporary prophet is an anonymous messenger in Chicago who goes by the title of a Chosen Child; over the last few months Jesus has allegedly been giving this person dire warnings about the need to elect the right person as president later this year. A message from the first half of March states, “My little ones, I have been telling you in the past that this is your last election. If the wrong man gets elected there will be no need for another election. He will be your dictator for years to come and you will be living under tyranny. Your churches and schools and hospitals and anything Catholic will be closed. There will be no freedom for anything. You will be told what you are to believe and if you don’t go along with their system, you will be sent to concentration camps to be brainwashed.” Other messages allegedly received by this messenger in Chicago make it clear that the current occupant of the White House has a sinister agenda. Echoing this is a message from Jesus allegedly given to a woman in Michigan a few weeks ago, which states: “Your president cares nothing for your country or its people; he is obeying the demands of the one world people [those seeking a one world government, economic system, and religion] that will force the takeover of this once great land that was governed under God’s law.” This alleged message also has Jesus warning that “The doors to My churches will be closed and My Most Holy Eucharist will be found only through underground Masses.”

A third messenger, whom many of you will have heard of, is John Leary, whom I’ve known for over fifteen years, and whose alleged messages I’ve studied for even longer than that. Some of the major themes of the messages Jesus has allegedly given to Mr. Leary are that a behind-the-scenes movement toward a one-world-government is working to eliminate major obstacles to their plans—namely, Christian influences in American society, and U.S. freedom and prosperity; that as a result of these efforts and our society’s rebellion against God and its growing level of immorality, major upheavals will occur, including natural disasters, war, economic collapse, societal breakdown, the imposition of martial law, and an outright religious persecution; and that at the height of these dangers, angels will lead God’s faithful remnant to places of refuge, where they’ll be safe and

undetected until Divine Justice has finished cleansing the earth of evil and brought about a glorious new Era of Peace.

Rather than going into detail about this entire process, I want to focus on several recent messages Mr. Leary has allegedly received in February from Jesus pertaining to a possible religious persecution. For example, this warning was given early this year: “My people . . . , the latest [mandate] forcing [the] handing out [of] birth control devices [by] all of your religious organizations is just the beginning of your problems. As your government looks to make cuts in your health plans, you will see rationed care, especially less care to be given to the elderly. Eventually, these same authorities will try to force mandatory chips in the body on you for your identification. You will soon need this chip for your health care, and any government entitlement [such] as Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, and welfare. Even food stamps will require such a chip in the body.” Needless to say, this chip represents the “mark of the beast” mentioned in the Book of Revelation, and in many alleged messages Jesus warns us not to take this chip under any circumstances; He will instead provide for all our needs in a miraculous way.

Jesus also allegedly said, “Your current administration has taken away many of your freedoms guaranteed by your Constitution. It is about time that your people realize what is going on, and now they are speaking out against your president’s edicts. If you do not take a stand for your religious freedom, then all of your freedoms will be taken away when these evil ones bring in the North American Union. Be prepared for a heavy-handed battle against your rights.” The North American Union, of course, is a proposed regional government for Canada, the United States, and Mexico, which would have unified laws and a newly-introduced common currency. This would supposedly be introduced to enhance our security and economic prosperity, but would actually be a major step in eliminating American sovereignty and imposing a one-world-government.

A further message allegedly given to Mr. Leary by Jesus states, “My people, today you are fighting for your religious freedom [in that] you do not want to be forced to do something against your faith [such] as handing out birth control devices. Tomorrow you will soon be struggling for your life as you will be persecuted for just believing in Me.... As the evil people gain in power, your persecution will worsen because the one-world-people will be trying to eradicate Christianity.” It’s reasonable to assume this persecution won’t happen all at once; there will be a series of gradual restrictions, each rooted in political correctness or justified in the name of national security—until, through a step-by-step process, the First Amendment’s guarantee of the free exercise of religion will be a dead letter, and America will officially no longer be one nation under God.

Many details of this looming nightmare are given in the visions and messages from Our Lord and Our Lady received by an alleged visionary in Michigan whom I’ll call Vincent—again, someone I’ve known for over fifteen years. Vincent is also known to Maureen Flynn, the publisher of *Signs & Wonders for Our Time* magazine, and she’s told me his messages are in line with revelations allegedly given to other contemporary visionaries and locutionists. These messages and visions I’ll mention here have all allegedly been given to Vincent over the last eighteen months.

First of all, if you've wondered why, a few years ago, the government was willing to spend money to help every household acquire a high-digital TV even as it faced huge operating deficits, it seems there was a sinister agenda at work, probably involving efforts to monitor and control citizens. Moreover, Our Lady told Vincent, "HDTV is destroying your immune system," and then he saw the words "Hell's Demonic Transmitted Virus"—HDTV. Vincent was also told that all currency will soon be replaced by an ID card with a chip, which will limit and track purchases, and grocery shopping will be allowed only once a week. Also, driver's licenses will need to be renewed every three months, and persons 65 and older will not be allowed to drive. Our Lady said, "Police will be randomly searching homes, even if you're not there." Still more ominously, the Department of Homeland Security will require children, ages 8 - 16, to attend classes at undisclosed campsites for 30 days, where they'll be trained as informers to report any illegal activity they see—presumably eventually including the practice of religion.

As part of a long-predicted schism or division within the Catholic Church in the United States, many Catholic churches will separate from the Vatican. Vincent was told several times, "Eighty percent of Catholics will drift away from the True Faith." Part of the reason for this, of course, will be the increasing pressures placed on those trying to continue practicing their religion. First of all, there will be a law requiring people to register their religion, church, and frequency of attendance; soon afterwards, another law will forbid crosses to be displayed outside of the church buildings, even on church property, and then church services will be limited to once a month. The use of Bibles in public will be forbidden (but no restrictions will be placed on the public use of the Koran). There are other government regulations being prepared for churches, including a requirement that they perform gay marriages. Also, Our Lady said, "Priests will have to submit [to] and pass a lie detector test in order to legally continue their ministry"—and this test will ask them about any criminal offenses mentioned to them in the confessional. Private confessions themselves will eventually become illegal; instead, sins will have to be confessed in front of a lay panel of three or more persons. It will be illegal to mention or discuss the Ten Commandments in public, or to mention God's Name in public places. It will also be illegal to display or use rosaries in public places, and this will include churches, which will be monitored by cameras and recorders.

Eventually, many religious believers will be taken to detention centers for refusing to deny their faith. Those persons marked for arrest once martial law is declared—namely, devout Christians and patriotic Americans opposed to a one-world-government—are already listed in computers. The FEMA camps are staffed with foreign troops, and most of the detention centers already secretly hold innocent detainees. If large numbers of arrests make it necessary, public parks and recreation centers will also become detention centers. Jesus said, "Persecutions will spread like wild-fire. Christians will be targeted throughout the world. Concentration camps are [already] staffed and operating." Also, Vincent had a vision of churches burning in the United States, and Our Lady told him, "Many priests will be martyred," and he then saw a vision of several priests hung or crucified. Mary also said, "Soon Christian religions will be illegal." Another revelation Vincent received explains this point; he was told that once a one-world-religion is

introduced, approximately one-half of the churches in our country will refuse to participate in it, and will therefore be forced to close.

If all this seems too incredible or horrible to believe, another message of Our Lady helps put these revelations into context, for as she told Vincent, “Satan is now in charge of every government in the world.” If this is indeed true, then an all-out assault on Christianity is a certainty. Looking at the war-mongering, corruption, and seemingly-irrational policies of many world governments today, I find it quite easy to accept the authenticity of this additional vision granted to Vincent. He saw Satan sitting on a throne, holding a lit torch in his left hand and a branding iron with the numeral 666 in his left. Eighteen world leaders—a symbolic number representing six plus six plus six—were standing in submission in a semi-circle facing Satan on his throne.

It almost sounds as if the devil and his many servants are gaining the upper hand. However, Jesus and Mary have continually assured us that the minority of devout Christians who are called to endure arrest, imprisonment, and even martyrdom will be given the grace and strength needed to remain true to their faith, and all the other faithful servants of God will be led to places of safety—despite the efforts of their enemies. Our Lady told Vincent, “Rosaries will interrupt tracking systems. Angels will guide God’s flock to designated refuges. Only He knows the lists, the sites, and the time.” Vincent was also given a vision of a priest offering an outdoor Mass by candlelight—an act that will be strictly illegal in the future. A helicopter was flying overhead, searching for such illegal activity, and a searchlight was shining down on everyone kneeling at the Mass—but all that could be seen from the helicopter was empty grass.

A similar vision speaks of the importance of the rosary. Vincent saw people walking down both sides of a city street, when suddenly military trucks pulled up; soldiers began forcing civilians onto the trucks and then took them away. However, among the people walking the streets were some who wore rosaries around their necks or carried them in their hands; they were allowed to proceed unhindered, almost as if they were invisible. This leads into a final, highly-important and symbolic vision Vincent received. He saw an endless number of people walking down a road; when they came to a fork, they had to choose whether to go to the right or to the left. Alongside the road to the right were baskets of rosaries; the road to the left was lined by baskets of gold coins. Devout followers of Christ went to the right, but most people went to the left, stuffing their pockets with gold. Eventually both roads became bridges crossing a great abyss. For those traveling the right-hand road, the Era of Peace—or a New Eden—was awaiting them on the other side of the abyss, and they crossed over safely. A pot of gold apparently awaited those traveling the road to the left—but in trying to reach it, they all fell into the abyss because their bridge crumbled beneath their feet.

If we give into the values of this world, or rely upon our own efforts to make it through the coming chastisements, we will certainly fail—possibly at the cost of our immortal souls. More than ever before in our lifetimes, it’s essential that we be firmly rooted in faith. Certainly there’s nothing wrong with making prudent material and financial preparations, especially if we’re led to do so as a result of prayer and discernment;

however, our trust must ultimately be in God, for He alone can help us remain firm in a coming time of turmoil, confusion, and persecution. Spiritual preparations must always come first, and then material ones; moreover, Our Lord has promised to provide for His people, even to the point of multiplying food and confusing the electronic tracking devices of the one-world-authorities, as long as we live in a spirit of obedience, generosity, and trust.

Assuming we do have a solid spiritual foundation, and are seriously living our religion, there are some practical things we should be doing or considering as we prepare for a coming possible religious persecution.

First of all, we must use our religious freedom while we still can, and avoid taking it for granted or assuming everything will remain more or less the way it is now. Even apart from alleged private revelations on the subject, there are numerous signs in government and society that a persecution may be on the way. Now is the time to resist this trend as fervent Catholics and concerned citizens. Our bishops (in “Our Most Cherished Liberty”) have stated, “There is an urgent need for the lay faithful, in cooperation with Christians, Jews, and others, to impress upon our elected representatives the importance of continued protection of religious liberty in a free society.” Therefore, we should join organizations such as the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights, Focus on the Family, and the American Family Association; write letters to the editor when our Catholic faith or our Christian values are attacked, and let elected officials know where we stand on issues involving religious freedom and moral values. Above all, vote—in every election—only for candidates who not only say the right things, but who have a track record of defending human life and religious liberty. We do *not* have to apologize for letting our Catholic Faith guide and inform our political and social values, and we must vigorously oppose any efforts to turn us into second-class citizens. It’s time we started pushing back, in a peaceful and loving but unyielding way; there’s nothing wrong with Catholics adopting an “in your face” attitude toward society—as long as we show the face of Jesus while we’re doing it.

Secondly, we must find others who believe as we do—perhaps by looking around at some of those here right now—and begin meeting together and talking and sharing and brainstorming. Become well-informed on these issues. Has one of you read a good book or magazine article on this subject? Mention it or share it with others in your circle of friends and acquaintances. Can someone in your group personally vouch for a political candidate as being a person of true patriotism and integrity? Consider that input as you decide how you’ll vote. Do you know someone who’s very good at using the various communication technologies? Seek his or her help in organizing e-mail alerts and on-line petitions. The more you know about coming threats, the better prepared you’ll be to resist them; the more you know other people who feel strongly on these issues like you, the easier it will be to overcome temptations to hopelessness and discouragement.

Thirdly, we must strengthen our relationship with Christ, learning to trust in Him ever more deeply, for a solid spiritual foundation is necessary in order to withstand the troubles of life in general, and the unique challenges of our era of history in particular.

Our Lord's parable of the house built on a rock foundation (Mt. 7:24-27) is timely and important in this regard. Too many Christians today—Catholics most definitely included—have built their lives on sand by giving a higher priority to this world than to the Kingdom of God, and so if the threatening storms do arrive, their so-called faith will come crashing down. We must be sure we're putting Jesus first; we must be closely united to the One Who promises that He has conquered the world (Jn. 16:33), seeking His guidance in all things and learning to trust in His care for us. This also involves keeping a proper perspective; as one Christian leader pointed out, "The reason Christians are being persecuted is because we are winning, not because we are losing." Satan knows his time is short, and that the victory promised through the Immaculate Heart of Mary draws near; therefore, we should see the frightened roars of his servants for what they are: the death rattles of a doomed and defeated kingdom of evil.

Fourthly, if we've not already done so, we should very soon make whatever material or physical preparations we feel the Lord is calling us to do. Perhaps that may mean slowly weaning ourselves away from an over-reliance on technology; certainly it means being cautious in our use of electronic devices, including being careful what we watch on TV and assuming our telephone conversations and computer communications are being monitored. We should also pray about possibly storing food and water, acquiring useful barter items in case of an emergency or economic collapse, and purchasing any religious articles or books we may need or want while they're still available. These preparations, however, must be undertaken in a spirit not of fear and selfishness, but one of generosity and trust. Through Mr. Leary and various other alleged messengers, Jesus has promised that when it comes to food and water and other needed supplies, He will, if necessary, multiply what we have—but only *if* we generously share with others in need.

Lastly, we must pray and sacrifice as if our future and the future of our country depend on it—for they do. Our active participation in Mass, our attendance at Eucharistic Adoration, our Rosaries and Divine Mercy chaplets, our freely-chosen prayers offered in reparation for the sins of the world, and our fasting and other acts of penance, can unleash great spiritual power—not only benefiting ourselves and our loved ones, but also resulting in the conversion of many sinners and the delaying, lessening, or even prevention of many predicted chastisements. Prayer is extremely powerful—especially the two greatest prayers of all: the Mass and the Rosary. You can offer all your own daily prayers in reparation for our nation's sins, along with your regular intentions.

As Our Lady told us at Fatima, we need to pray for the souls in purgatory, the conversion of sinners, and for peace in the world—and today it's more evident than before that we must also pray for the Holy Father and all leaders of the Church, for the moral and spiritual renewal of our country, and for the restraining of all who seek to implement an evil agenda and harm the people of God. Prayer may delay, mitigate, or even prevent a coming religious persecution—and at the very least, it will help us and many others be spiritually ready if and when it arrives. According to recent prophecies, some followers of Jesus will experience hardship, imprisonment, or even martyrdom; many others will be led to places of refuge, and all who place their trust in the Lord will have their names written in the Book of Life.

As Archbishop Sheen warned, holding onto the truth may well earn us the world's hatred—but it's precisely this sort of persecution that reassures us that we're on the winning side. The Lord has promised us a share in His victory. In the meantime, He asks us to be watchful and ready, to reject the temptation to be anxious or fearful, and to turn to Him in all our needs. Most of us are still proud to be citizens of the United States, but our true allegiance is, and always should be, to the Kingdom of God. The blessings and freedoms we've experienced as Americans must not lessen our willingness to surrender everything to Christ, even to the point of dying in His Name—for in this way alone will we produce a rich harvest (Jn. 12:24-25).