A. The Nature of Persecution in the 21st Century

In 2011 Pope Benedict XVI said to American bishops, “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 . . . affect the lives of believers.” In a document created the following year, bishops in the United States warned, “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” (emphasis added). This warning was highly appropriate during the Obama Administration (arguably the most anti-Christian in American history). Things have improved considerably under President Trump, but his continuation in office is not assured.

Many carefully-researched books have documented the growing assault in our country on the free practice of Christianity, 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. Experts agree persecutions generally unfold in five stages. First, the targeted group is stereotyped or stigmatized. Second, it is marginalized, or pushed to the fringes of society. Third, the group is vilified, or blamed for society’s problems. Fourth, it is criminalized by means of legal restrictions on its membership and activities. Fifth, the final stage is one of outright persecution. Some commentators or experts believe we are in stage three of this process, and rapidly moving into stage four.

According to Rev. Donald Wildmon (a Methodist minister who founded the American Family Association), “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 ‘homosexualists’ for short—have some very real goals that they know they can only achieve by driving Christians out of public life.”

B. Technological Tools and Threats

Ours has become a “surveillance society,” and the widespread use of RFID (Radio-Frequency Identification) microchips, high-speed cameras, DNA databases, and the constant monitoring of telephone and computer communications, are robbing us of our privacy. Cell phones track the owner’s movements and location, and an iPhone’s microphone can be turned on without the person’s knowledge or consent. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) monitors dozens of popular websites, such as Facebook and Twitter, collecting “personally identifiable information” and sharing this data with federal agencies, employees, and contractors having a supposed “need to know.” A software program called Carrier ID is capable of tracking our every electronic move, including dialing a phone number, sending or receiving a text message, or using on-line banking. Facebook and Google, among others, sell users’ personal information to data brokers, as do smart TVs. (In 2015 Samsung actually warned its customers this was happening.)

The DHS plans to have the face, fingerprint, and iris scans of over 250 million Americans on file—biometric information collected from the images of travelers entering and leaving U.S. airports. RFID chips have already been implanted in human beings: either forcibly (as in the case of a sex trafficking victim) or voluntarily (for the “convenience and safety” of travelers or employees working in sensitive areas in countries such as Germany, Mexico, Sweden, Australia, Honduras, and elsewhere). These chips call to mind the “Mark of the Beast” in Revelation 13.
Communist China uses an infamous control mechanism called the Social Credit System, in which technology is used to monitor citizens’ behavior—and if the government doesn’t approve of their actions, attitudes, and public utterances (including calling for religious or political freedom), they face severe restrictions in travel, job opportunities, medical care, and financial transactions. A similar system may be coming to the United States. For instance, insurance companies may adjust your premiums based on what they see on your social media posts; Airbnb may permanently disable your account based on these postings (without telling you why), and your Uber driver may be rating you unfavorably even as you rate him. As one author writes, “The most disturbing attribute of a social credit system is not that it’s invasive, but that it’s extra-legal. Crimes are punished outside the legal system, which means no presumption of innocence, no legal representation, no judge, no jury, and often no appeal.”

C. Contemporary Warnings and Prophecies

In May 2020, Archbishop Carlo Vigano (former papal nuncio to the United States) issued an open letter—signed by numerous bishops, journalists, writers, immunologists, virologists, researchers, attorneys, and other professionals—which warned, “The facts have shown that, under the pretext of the COVID-19 epidemic, the inalienable rights of citizens have in many cases been violated and their fundamental freedoms, including the exercise of freedom of worship, expression and movement, have been disproportionately and unjustifiably restricted.” Using imagery from the Gospel of John, chapter 10, the Archbishop further noted, “There are faithful shepherds who care for the flock of Christ, but there are also mercenary infidels who seek to scatter the flock and hand the sheep over to be devoured by ravenous wolves.”

Our Lady allegedly told a visionary known as Elaine, “Even in the midst of chaos, there is always a faithful remnant remaining. As scattered as the sheep and good shepherds are now, this will become much worse in the days to come. However, Jesus will always see to it that His True Flock is shepherded; do not be afraid, even in America, where tumult and chaos make their ascendancy.” The visionary John Leary was allegedly told by Jesus, “The fear tactics [used by the One World Order advocates] will be even worse with the next virus attack [October 2020?] that will be more deadly . . . than the first attack. Before this next deadly attack, you will have My Warning, and I will bring My faithful believers into My refuges so they will be healed.”

The Warning refers to a simultaneous mystical experience in which everyone on earth over the age of reason will see the state of his or her soul as God sees it, and know if he or she currently merits Heaven, purgatory, or hell; this will result in the conversion of vast numbers of sinners. Our Lady spoke of the Warning to the visionaries of Garabandal in Spain in the early 1960s, and St. Faustina Kowalska describes it in her Diary (#83). Mr. Leary and other alleged visionaries, including the French Canadian priest Fr. Michel Rodrigue, claim the Warning will be followed by a six-week period in which the devil will be restrained from tempting, deceiving, or influencing anyone, so as to allow sufficient time for evangelization and conversion. However, after this interval, Satan and his minions will redouble their efforts, ultimately placing growing restrictions on patriotic, God-fearing people in the United States and elsewhere; these efforts will likely culminate in civil war and a religious persecution, even in the midst of a second pandemic, along with a possible schism or division in the Church, economic collapse, societal breakdown, increasing international tensions, and perhaps even World War III. Providentially, many contemporary prophets state that God will lead His faithful remnant to places of refuge, where they will safely await the cleansing of all evil from the earth through God’s direct intervention, with this resulting in the promised coming Triumph of the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

Jesus warned His followers they might experience the same hatred the world had directed at Him (Jn. 15:18-19), but stated this persecution would actually be a source of blessing (Mt. 5:11-12). We are to respond not with fear, but with trust. Psalm 91 is a prayer truly suitable for our times, for it speaks of how God will protect us, how no evil will befall us, and how no pestilence will touch us—for the Lord is indeed our refuge and our fortress, and the God in Whom we trust.