



December 15, 2021

SENT VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

Attorney General Merrick Garland  
Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights Kristen Clarke  
U.S. Department of Justice  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20530-0001

Dear Attorney General Garland and Assistant Attorney General Clarke:

On behalf of CatholicVote, representing the voices of millions of Catholics across America who seek to renew our country and our culture, I am writing to voice our concerns over the disturbing increase in attacks against Catholic symbols, shrines, statues and churches across the United States over the past year. We ask that the Department of Justice investigate these complaints and take appropriate action.

In the past year, we have witnessed, among other things, in California, statues of Father Junipero Serra toppled in protest of what activists have called the ‘enslavement’ of Native Americans. A monument for “babies whose lives are ended by abortion” was knocked over at Our Lady of the Assumption Church in Bloomingburg, New York. The Cathedral Basilica of the Immaculate Conception in Denver, Colorado, was recently marked with Satanic graffiti. Earlier this month, just miles from your offices, security-camera footage recorded a man attacking a statue of Our Lady of Fatima at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C., by cutting off her hands and hammering at her face.

CHICAGO  
PO BOX 2709  
CHICAGO, IL 60690  
(312) 201-6559

MADISON  
PO BOX 259837  
MADISON, WI 53725  
(608) 535-6317

CARMEL  
211 W MAIN ST  
SUITE 303  
CARMEL, IN 46032  
(317) 669-6127

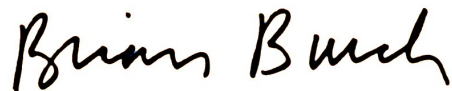
In total, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has documented at least 114 incidents against Catholicism across 29 states and the District of Columbia, since May 2020. These incidents include: arson; statues beheaded, smashed, and painted; gravestones defaced with swastikas and anti-Catholic language and American flags next to them burned; and other forms of destruction and vandalism. These incidents appear driven by animosity directed specifically at Catholics.

Under 18 U.S. Code § 247 it is the duty of the Attorney General to investigate and prosecute, when necessary, those who do damage to religious property or participate in the obstruction of persons in the free exercise of religious beliefs. The Justice Department has touted efforts to prosecute crimes against protected classes of Americans, including race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and ancestry. Yet you have made no meaningful effort to raise awareness, or address the disturbing rise in hate-filled attacks on Catholic religious symbols, shrines, statues and churches.

Religious liberty is a foundational principle of enduring importance in America, enshrined in the First Amendment of our Constitution and federal law. The vandalism we are seeing today is quickly rising to levels that haven't been seen since the late 1800's and early 1900's from organized groups such as the Know-Nothings and the Ku Klux Klan.

It is imperative that the Department of Justice investigate these incidents. Those who break the law by defacing a house of worship or causing major damage to church property and important religious symbols must be held to account for their actions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brian Burch". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Brian Burch  
President, CatholicVote