

Just a few thoughts that I would like to share: Fr. Denis Reilly, OP

I think that most of us are unaware of the Christian martyrs that go unreported. I read the following in an Israeli magazine. Reported cases of Christians killed for their faith around the world doubled in 2013 from the year before, with Syria accounting for more than the whole global total in 2012, according to an annual survey. Open Doors, a non-denominational group supporting persecuted Christians worldwide said it had documented 2,123 martyr killings, compared with 1,201 in 2012. There were 1,213 such deaths in Syria alone last year. This is a very minimal count based on what has been reported in the media and that we can confirm, said the head of research for Open Doors. Estimates by other Christian groups put the annual figure as high as 8,000. Christianity is the largest and most widely spread faith in the world, with 2.2 billion followers, or 32 percent of the world population and yet it faces restrictions and hostility in 111 countries. In the list of killings, Syria was followed by Nigeria with 612 cases last year; Pakistan was third with 88; Egypt ranked fourth with 83. The report had no figures for killings in North Korea, but said that Christians there faced the highest imaginable pressure and some 50,000 to 70,000 live in political prison camps.

On a different plane and one closer to home are some reflections from a book entitled Rediscover Catholicism by Matthew Kelly. In this book, Kelly chastises Catholics for being ashamed of their Catholicism and so he points to some facts that have perhaps skipped our radar. After stating that there are some 67 million Catholics in the United States, he focuses on some realities that we should not overlook. Kelly points out that "prior to the Church's introduction of education for the common man, education was reserved only for those with money. Almost the entire Western world is educated today because of the Church's pioneering role in universal education. The global reach and contribution of the Church is enormous, but the national impact of the Church on every aspect of society is also impressive, though largely unknown. In the United States alone, the Catholic Church educates 2.6 million students every day, at a cost of ten billion dollars a year to parents and parishes. If there were no Catholic schools, these same students would have to be educated in public schools, which would cost eighteen billion dollars, thus the Catholic education system alone saves American taxpayers eighteen billion dollars a year.

In the field of secondary education, the Church has more than 230 colleges and universities in the U.S., with an enrollment of seven hundred thousand students. In terms of health care, the Catholic Church has a nonprofit hospital system comprising of 637 hospitals, which treat one in five patients in the U.S. every day.

Beyond our national and global impact, the local contribution Catholics make in every community, on a daily basis, is nothing short of remarkable. Every city and town has its own stories, but allow me just one example to make my point. In Chicago, there are hundreds of Catholic organizations that serve the needs of the people of that city. **One** of those organizations is Catholic Charities. This year the local chapter of Catholic Charities in Chicago will provide 2.2 million free meals to the hungry and the needy in that area. That's 6,027 meals a day—just one small example of our enormous contribution. Every city has a hundred stories like this one. Sadly we have forgotten our story and as a result we allow the anti-Catholic segments of the media to distort our story on a daily basis."

I thought that these reflections are worth noting...and so, have we forgotten our story and the martyrs who have died for their faith???