SPECIAL EDITION EP
PERSECUTED CHRISTIANS

BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO ARE PERSECUTED FOR THEIRS IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN
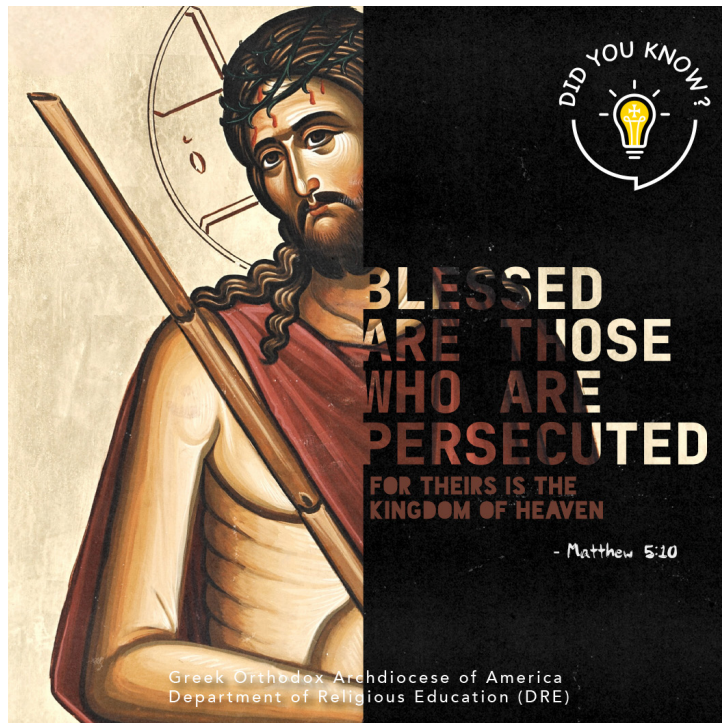
— Matthew 5:10

Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America
Department of Religious Education (DRE)

Did you know which religious group faces the most persecution worldwide?

According to reports, Christians are the most persecuted religious group in the world. This is nothing new. For the first three centuries, giving one's life as a testimony to one's faith in Christ was the defining mark of the Christian. Today, it still is in many places in the world.

The World Watch List from the 2023 Open Doors report states that 365 million Christians were subject to "high levels of persecution and discrimination." Approximately 1 in 7 Christians were persecuted worldwide, 4,998 Christians were killed for faith-related reasons, and 14,766 Churches and Christian properties were attacked.

In Istanbul, Turkey (formerly Constantinople), the Ecumenical Patriarchate has no legal identity. They do not recognize the "ecumenical" status of the Ecumenical Patriarch despite being the spiritual leader of the world's 300 million Orthodox Christians. The government has imposed restrictions on all patriarchal elections, closed the seminary, and confiscated thousands of church properties. Recently, the Chora Church and Hagia Sophia Church were reconverted into mosques.

Despite all this, Jesus encourages us, "Do not fear" (Matthew 10:28). Our Lord explains, "If the world hates you, be aware that it hated me before it hated you. If you belonged to the world, the world would love you as its own. Because you do not belong to the world…the world hates you…If they persecuted me, they will persecute you" (John 15:18-20). In fact, Jesus says, "Blessed are those who are persecuted…for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:10).

Saint Ignatius of Antioch says, "Christianity shows its greatness when it is hated by the world." This is our consolation and joy during persecution.

Send us your questions at: religioused@goarch.org

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