

## Religious freedom, vocations among bishops' top priorities

by [Lilly Fowler](#)

June 16, 2015

*c. 2015 St. Louis Post-Dispatch*

ST. LOUIS — Religious freedom, vocations to the priesthood, family and marriage were among the top priorities Roman Catholic bishops from across the U.S. gathered here in St. Louis outlined last week.

Some bishops, however, left the discussion feeling dissatisfied.

They argued bishops should follow in the steps of Pope Francis and place a greater emphasis on alleviating poverty.

“There needs to be given greater visibility to plight of the poor,” said Bishop George Thomas of Helena, Montana.

Approximately 250 U.S. bishops gathered at the Hyatt Regency at the Arch for a second day of meetings. They were here for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops annual spring assembly, held June 10-12.

Other priorities outlined by bishops included evangelization, as well as human life and dignity—combating the “throwaway culture of abortion and euthanasia.”

Regarding religious freedom, the persecution of Christians was of specific concern. “I am burning. Christianity is burning,” said Bishop Yousif Habash of the Syrian Catholic Church in Newark, New Jersey.

A draft of the priorities is expected to be finalized at the 2016 general assembly, held in November in Baltimore.

Wednesday, Archbishop Joseph E. Kurtz of Louisville, Kentucky, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, kicked off the general assembly by referring to Ferguson, Missouri, and releasing a statement on racism.