



Focus Article for July 2012

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Archbishop William Lori (l) &
Massimo Introvigne
(Photo Fabio Bernabei)

ITALY ESTABLISHES OBSERVATORY ON RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Following the lead of the United States, Canada and other countries, Italy too has set up an Observatory on Religious Freedom to monitor and combat violations of religious freedom around the world, beginning with the areas at risk where religious minorities are being persecuted.

The Observatory was established by the Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs and the City of Rome and is run by a Coordinator, the sociologist Massimo Introvigne and four members: two diplomats expert on Human Rights, Diego

Brasioli and Roberto Vellano, and two representative from NGOs: Attilio Tamburrini and Roberto Fontolan.

The initiative was presented on 28 June in Rome at the Foreign Press Association with a speech by Archbishop of Baltimore William Lori entitled "Religious Liberty: God's Gift to all Nations is our Responsibility to Defend."

William E. Lori is Archbishop of Baltimore, the oldest diocese in the United States. He also heads the **Commission on Religious Freedom of the U.S. Bishops' Conference** created recently in response to the recent clashes with the White House for the the US government's Health and Human Services (HHS) mandate; under this mandate, institutions would be required by law to provide contraceptive pharmaceuticals and medical procedures for employees, regardless of religious belief.

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