

Faith Leaders Mourn Notre Dame but See Beauty in Ashes

The world watched aghast as the 12th-century church crumbled in the flames.

Monday, Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris caught fire during construction. The iconic spire collapsed, and the building suffered “colossal damages.”

The church represented more than faith to many people around the globe. *The New York Times* reported the fate of priceless cultural treasures was uncertain. On Tuesday morning, fire fighters successfully extinguished the flames, and Paris began to take stock of its losses.

Believers around the globe weighed in about how the damages represented physical and spiritual changes.

Here's what some of them are saying:

Samuel Rodriguez, president of NHCLC

My heart breaks at the loss of this iconic cathedral that belongs first to the parishioners of Paris, but also to worshipers and admirers around the world. Last year, my family and I visited the cathedral and stood overwhelmed by its historic spiritual and cultural influence, which for centuries has stood as an enduring symbol of European Christianity.

Let us remember today that we serve a God who knows how to bring beauty from the ashes. Let us join the Archbishop of Paris in praying that what remains is saved from the flames, and what is lost may be rebuilt to the glory of God. May the faith of the people all across Europe rise alongside the new walls, spires and stained glass that replace what's been

lost. May a spiritual awakening emerge out of this tragedy, and may Europe embrace in a new way the grace-filled, vicarious, atoning work of Jesus. As we mourn, may we not only see this as the end of something, but as the beginning of something altogether new, promising and filled with grace.

Frank J. Gaffney, president and CEO of Save the Persecuted Christians

The fire that catastrophically consumed Christendom's most beautiful cathedral in the heart of one of its most important capitals is a tragedy not only for Christians, but for the world. While the cause of this particularly devastating loss remains to be determined, it comes against the backdrop of numerous attacks that have desecrated or destroyed Christian houses of worship across France.

This pattern of attacks is a symptom of a Sharia-supremacist assault on Christianity in France, often enabled by the country's intolerant secular left. It suggests that the kind of persecution that is now afflicting some 300 million followers of Christ elsewhere around the world is coming full force to Europe as well.

Americans are on notice: Unless we counter the forces perpetrating such crimes against humanity in furtherance of the global triumph of Sharia, we will be subjected to similar predations here, too. Indeed, a leading indicator of the state of submission in this country is the self-censorship that seems to be precluding widespread reporting about the wave of attacks on churches in Europe, and anti-Christian persecution more generally.

This phenomenon amounts to compliance with Sharia-blasphemy restrictions, and only incentivizes its adherents to demand further concessions. We must stand up for Christians and Christianity in the face of those who would destroy, not just their houses of worship, but the faith itself, as well as its

practitioners.

Martin Clarke, Spirit-filled international businessman based in London:

Thanks to the heroic efforts of over 400 fire fighters, we have awoken to the news that the fire of Notre Dame in Paris, though devastating, has not completely obliterated the Cathedral. The two 200-foot bell towers, stone vault and parts of the interior still stand. The prayers of those that stood and prayed and sang in the streets of Paris all night as church bells tolled were answered.

The medieval Catholic cathedral was built over a 100-year period from 1160 on the site of a Gallo-Roman Church. April 15, 2019, was not the first time that the "Old Lady of Paris" was besieged. In 1790 during the French Revolution, it was desecrated. In 1944, upon the liberation of Paris from Nazi occupation, much damage was caused.

These ashes this morning are ashes of hope as President Emmanuel Macron has declared that it will be rebuilt. Already a French billionaire has pledged the funds to do so.

Many of the antiquities and art were saved. And though Easter is this weekend, we do not yet know if the piece of Christ's crown of thorns survived the fire.

I have been into the cathedral on many occasions, as it is the heart of Paris on the hill at Ile de la Cite. Its presence always brought solace to the 14 million that visited it annually. Joan of Arc was beatified there, and Napoleon crowned there in 1804. Six years later, he married his bride Marie Louise of Austria in its hallowed halls.

We in Britain have seen our own St Paul's in central London and York Minister ravaged by fire. Yet from the fire of St Paul's, the great architect Sir Christopher Wren salvaged the

cornerstone for today's edifice. At the central portal at Notre Dame was the Tympanum, which depicted the last judgement with people being led to the eternal hell fire and some to heaven. I'm not sure if that has survived, but as we enter this Easter week we are reminded that through the suffering of Jesus Christ there is resurrection and restoration available to us all if only we answer.

We know that which was meant to harm can be turned around for good and we know that the people of France will bring full restoration to Notre Dame to tell a new story and a new chapter in the history of this great French Gothic Cathedral. Pray for Paris, pray for France. Vive la France!

Dede Laugesen, Save the Persecuted Christians executive director

Due to the extensive damage, we may never know the cause of the inferno that has destroyed Notre Dame Cathedral. Bill Donohue, president of the Catholic League, and Phillipe Karsenty, a French elected official, were cut off by Fox News anchors when they raised the concern that this fire may in fact be tied to a string of suspicious fires and acts of desecration at churches and cemeteries all over France in just the past few months. These heinous, religious-based hate crimes targeting Christians demand attention. What happened at Notre Dame must be investigated in light of these recent acts of violence. They should be heard.

Faith leaders and politicians also shared their condolences and prayers on social media.

My heart breaks for the people of Paris after seeing the fire at Notre Dame Cathedral. Praying for everyone's safety.

– Melania Trump (@FLOTUS) April 15, 2019

My heart is with the people of Paris. I've been to Notre Dame Cathedral many, many times over the decades. We were there as a family last summer. Just heartbreaking.

– Christine Caine (@ChristineCaine) April 16, 2019

Saddened to hear about the Notre Dame fire in Paris, France. Pray for the safety of first responders as they fight the blaze at this historic cathedral.

– Franklin Graham (@Franklin_Graham) April 15, 2019

Today we unite in prayer with the people of France, as we wait for the sorrow inflicted by the serious damage to be transformed into hope with reconstruction. Holy Mary, Our Lady, pray for us. #NotreDame

– Pope Francis (@Pontifex) April 16, 2019

It's always a tragedy when historic, magnificent, architectural masterpieces are damaged or destroyed, whether they have religious significance or not. #notredamecathedralfire

– Scott (@PastorDScott) April 15, 2019

Notre Dame is an iconic symbol of faith to people all over the world – and it is heartbreaking to see a house of God in flames. Our thoughts and prayers are with the firefighters on the scene and all the people of Paris.

– Vice President Mike Pence (@VP) April 15, 2019

In 2016, an ISIS terror cell plotted to destroy the Notre Dame cathedral, but fortunately were thwarted by police. Amidst Holy Week three years later, are we seeing an act of terror succeed in Paris? If not, what then has caused this

horrific inferno?

– Joel C. Rosenberg (@JoelCRosenberg) April 15, 2019

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