Opinion
Guest Voices



U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio appears on a screen at the "Rededicate 250: A National Jubilee of Prayer, Praise & Thanksgiving" event at the National Mall in Washington, May 17, 2026. (OSV News/Reuters/Eric Lee)



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In anticipation of the 250th anniversary of the United States, thousands came to the National Mall in Washington for "Rededicate 250: A National Jubilee Of Prayer, Praise & Thanksgiving." The eight-hour-long event, created and organized by Freedom 250 in collaboration with the White House, drew throngs of people over the weekend, who waited in line to reach a grassy plot in front of a chapel-style stage with three arched screens. I attended the event as a Catholic public historian, curious about the materials that attendees, organizers and protestors were distributing.

But the materials that I and other members of the public received revealed deep-seated tension between Catholics and Protestants at an event focused on Christian unity and featuring Catholic speakers. I saw echoes of the same anti-Catholic conspiracies that have existed since the very beginning of the United States, and have affected the way that American Christianity has been constructed. The juxtaposition between the event's anti-Catholic elements and its Catholic speakers emphasized the ongoing fracture between Protestants and Catholics in Trump's MAGA coalition.

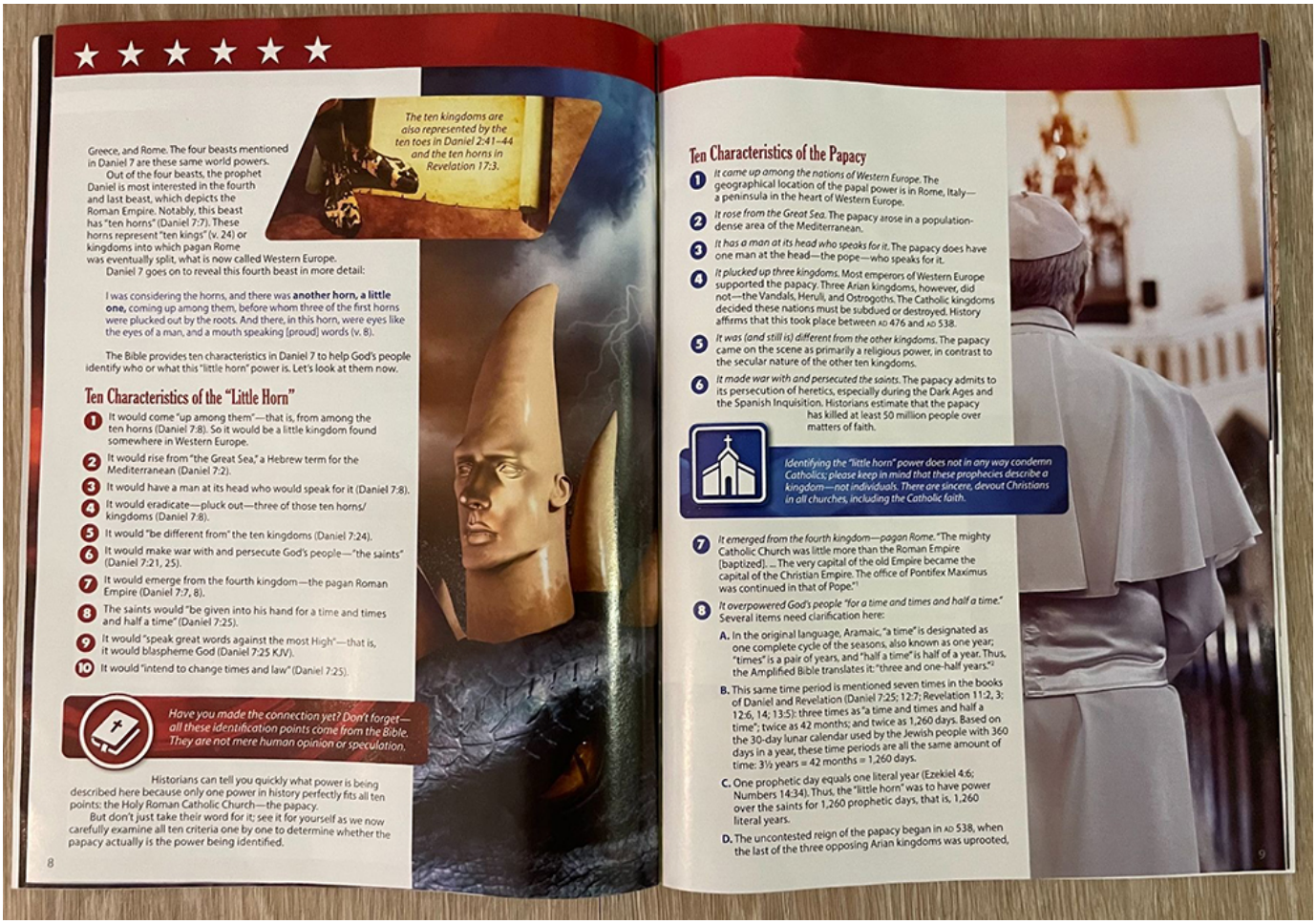
I, like everyone who walked up from the Smithsonian metro stop, was handed a bag with the screenprinted logo "Religious Freedom 250" from Amazing Facts International, a multimillion dollar religious nonprofit organization run by Pastor Doug Batchelor.

In it was Ellen Gould White's *The Fall and Rise of Jerusalem: The Great Controversy Between Good and Evil*, along with a glossy magazine titled "Religious Freedom and America in Bible Prophecy: The Future of Earth's Last Superpower Revealed" published by Amazing Facts and other assorted leaflets. While not officially affiliated with the event, the bag and its contents closely mirrored Rededicate 250's design, and they were the only materials that I was handed while walking around the event.

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I was already skeptical of the materials because White is well-known for her anti-Catholic views. In fact, White's book *The Great Controversy*, which argues that the Catholic Church misinterprets the Second and Fourth Commandments, is a prominent source of anti-Catholic conspiracies.

But what I encountered inside of the magazine was even more blatant.



Greece, and Rome. The four beasts mentioned in Daniel 7 are these same world powers.

Out of the four beasts, the prophet Daniel is most interested in the fourth and last beast, which depicts the Roman Empire. Notably, this beast has "ten horns" (Daniel 7:7). These horns represent "ten kings" (v. 24) or kingdoms into which pagan Rome was eventually split, what is now called Western Europe.

Daniel 7 goes on to reveal this fourth beast in more detail:

> I was considering the horns, and there was **another horn, a little one,** coming up among them, before whom three of the first horns were plucked out by the roots. And there, in this horn, were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking [proud] words (v. 8).

The Bible provides ten characteristics in Daniel 7 to help God's people identify who or what this "little horn" power is. Let's look at them now.

The ten kingdoms are also represented by the ten toes in Daniel 2:41–44 and the ten horns in Revelation 17:3.

Ten Characteristics of the "Little Horn"

1. It would come "up among them"—that is, from among the ten horns (Daniel 7:8). So it would be a little kingdom found somewhere in Western Europe.
2. It would rise from "the Great Sea," a Hebrew term for the Mediterranean (Daniel 7:2).
3. It would have a man at its head who would speak for it (Daniel 7:8).
4. It would eradicate—pluck out—three of those ten horns/kingdoms (Daniel 7:8).
5. It would "be different from" the ten kingdoms (Daniel 7:24).
6. It would make war with and persecute God's people—"the saints" (Daniel 7:21, 25).
7. It would emerge from the fourth kingdom—the pagan Roman Empire (Daniel 7:7, 8).
8. The saints would "be given into his hand for a time and times and half a time" (Daniel 7:25).
9. It would "speak great words against the most High"—that is, it would blaspheme God (Daniel 7:25 KJV).
10. It would "intend to change times and law" (Daniel 7:25).

Have you made the connection yet? Don't forget—all these identification points come from the Bible. They are not mere human opinion or speculation.

Historians can tell you quickly what power is being described here because only one power in history perfectly fits all ten points: the Holy Roman Catholic Church—the papacy.

But don't just take their word for it; see it for yourself as we now carefully examine all ten criteria one by one to determine whether the papacy actually is the power being identified.

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Ten Characteristics of the Papacy

1. *It came up among the nations of Western Europe.* The geographical location of the papal power is in Rome, Italy—a peninsula in the heart of Western Europe.
2. *It rose from the Great Sea.* The papacy arose in a population-dense area of the Mediterranean.
3. *It has a man at its head who speaks for it.* The papacy does have one man at the head—the pope—who speaks for it.
4. *It plucked up three kingdoms.* Most emperors of Western Europe supported the papacy. Three Arian kingdoms, however, did not—the Vandals, Heruli, and Ostrogoths. The Catholic kingdoms decided these nations must be subdued or destroyed. History affirms that this took place between AD 476 and AD 538.
5. *It was (and still is) different from the other kingdoms.* The papacy came on the scene as primarily a religious power, in contrast to the secular nature of the other ten kingdoms.
6. *It made war with and persecuted the saints.* The papacy admits to its persecution of heretics, especially during the Dark Ages and the Spanish Inquisition. Historians estimate that the papacy has killed at least 50 million people over matters of faith.

Identifying the "little horn" power does not in any way condemn Catholics; please keep in mind that these prophecies describe a kingdom—not individuals. There are sincere, devout Christians in all churches, including the Catholic faith.

7. *It emerged from the fourth kingdom—pagan Rome.* "The mighty Catholic Church was little more than the Roman Empire [baptized]. ... The very capital of the old Empire became the capital of the Christian Empire. The office of Pontifex Maximus was continued in that of Pope."[1]
8. *It overpowered God's people "for a time and times and half a time."* Several items need clarification here:
   - **A.** In the original language, Aramaic, "a time" is designated as one complete cycle of the seasons, also known as one year; "times" is a pair of years, and "half a time" is half of a year. Thus, the Amplified Bible translates it: "three and one-half years."[2]
   - **B.** This same time period is mentioned seven times in the books of Daniel and Revelation (Daniel 7:25; 12:7; Revelation 11:2, 3; 12:6, 14; 13:5): three times as "a time and times and half a time"; twice as 42 months; and twice as 1,260 days. Based on the 30-day lunar calendar used by the Jewish people with 360 days in a year, these time periods are all the same amount of time: 3½ years = 42 months = 1,260 days.
   - **C.** One prophetic day equals one literal year (Ezekiel 4:6; Numbers 14:34). Thus, the "little horn" was to have power over the saints for 1,260 prophetic days, that is, 1,260 literal years.
   - **D.** The uncontested reign of the papacy began in AD 538, when the last of the three opposing Arian kingdoms was uprooted,

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The inside of the magazine "Religious Freedom and America in Bible Prophecy: The Future of Earth's Last Superpower Revealed" (Courtesy of Emma Cieslik)

In articles stating that "an image of the first beast [prophesized in Revelation] would be a representation of the papacy," the magazine argued that Catholicism itself is the greatest threat to religious liberty in the United States.

"In order for the USA to make a copy of the papacy, a church-state government," the magazine read, "it would have to set aside its founding principles and combine church and state. Upon doing so, in imitation of the papacy at the height of its power

during the Dark Ages, the USA will then legislate religious observance in accordance with the papacy. It will then influence all the nations of the world to follow its example."

From arguments about the Catholic Church observing commandments different from those in the Bible to conspiracy theories about the fabricated papal title *Vicarius Filii Dei* standing for 666, or a numerology indicative of the devil, this magazine regurgitated nativist, anti-Catholic conspiracies that have a long, dark history in America — from the Know-Nothing party and the Bloody Monday Massacre of German Catholics in Louisville, Kentucky, in the mid-1800s, to Ku Klux Klan violence against Catholics and incendiary conspiracy theories about American Catholics' loyalty.

The anti-Catholic rhetoric of these materials stood in strange contrast to the high-profile Catholics speaking at the event including JD Vance and Marco Rubio, and ordained Catholic leaders Bishop Robert Barron and Cardinal Timothy Dolan. Barron himself may have been alluding to anti-Catholicism during his keynote address when he said that "I can stand on this National Mall today as both a proud Catholic bishop and a proud American citizen and say, 'God bless the United States of America.' "



Bishop Robert E. Barron of Winona-Rochester, Minnesota, a member of the U.S. Religious Liberty Commission, speaks at the "Rededicate 250: A National Jubilee of Prayer, Praise & Thanksgiving" event at the National Mall in Washington, May 17, 2026. (OSV News screenshot)

Although Amazing Facts International was not officially affiliated with Rededicate 250, anti-Catholic bigotry was woven into the fabric of the event, making Barron and Dolan's participation more curious. Headliners included Robert Jeffress, who has described Catholicism as a "cult-like pagan religion," and speakers Eric Metaxas and Jack Graham have accused Pope Leo XIV of "pious blather" and of not having read the bible, respectively.

These sentiments aren't limited to the external evangelical speakers — Rededicate 250 took place just weeks after the president openly attacked Leo for the pontiff's opposition to the war in Iran, and after Doug Wilson, the evangelical pastor who Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth has invited to host prayer services at the Pentagon, said that Marian processions would not be allowed in a Christian nationalist America because they are "a public display of idolatry."

While the extreme materials from Amazing Facts International may seem like isolated, possibly fringe, examples of contemporary anti-Catholicism, they are part of a larger picture. Rededicate 250 was plagued by the same division that has afflicted American Christians since our country's beginning, and which now undermines the already fragile MAGA coalition between Catholics and Protestants.

This story appears in the **USA 250** feature series. View the full series.