Opinion



by NCR Staff

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On Dec. 18, NCR published a story about the disappointment and resignation of U.S. Catholics that voted for President Donald Trump in the 2020 presidential election. After the events of Jan. 6, when Trump supporters laid siege to the U.S. Capitol, revisiting this story seems all the more important. Also, read about how some Catholics disagree that Trump's refusal to concede is problematic. Below are responses to the story that have been edited for length and clarity.

"Catholic Trump supporters see moment of division, resignation" is an article about white people who voted for a racist, a white supremacist xenophobe, yet immigration and racial justice are only mentioned briefly at the end of the article, which in my view is unjustifiable.

JEFFREY JONES

Hamburg, New York

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Although those of us who are Joe Biden supporters should be pleased the Catholic vote was almost evenly split between Biden and his predecessor, unlike in the election of 2016, the fact so many still support President Donald Trump is problematic.

Having grown up in the New York media environment before moving to the Midwest, I remember many details in news casts about Trump's marital infidelities, business failures, narcissistic preening for publicity, etc. None of these attributes would normally have been tolerated in the past by any candidate for public office on any level let alone president.

These Trump supporters seemed to have gravitated to Trump over one issue to which they point church teachings as the salient criterion. There are myriad church teachings involving economic and social justice, immigration, racial relations, etc. in which Biden is an exemplar of what a Catholic should believe.

His opposition to abortion also reflects church teaching but his inability to change any law by fiat precludes imposition of that belief. It is more likely the abortion rate will decline under a Biden administration as history shows it has under prior Democratic administrations wherein the social safety net is not threatened but supported and enhanced.

CHARLES A. LE GUERN

Granger, Indiana



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Thank you very much for this article. It shed light for me on the influence of the U.S. bishops' conference that abortion is the "preeminent" issue. My mother was a one-issue voter — abortion — and my younger sister has followed her example. It has caused a break in our relationship.

From the people who spoke to the reporter, one seemed to be a one-issue voter of a different kind — money. It was interesting that one person said to keep politics out of church, it is a place for church teaching. This certainly ties into the influence that I believe many priests have given to abortion. I'm afraid many of them are also not happy (to say the least) with Pope Francis. The message on abortion gets through to church people but the teachings of Francis (not only on abortion but also on inequality and other life issues) don't seem to be making it into the pews.

DAVID JACKSON

Edinburg, Texas

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First, I do not agree with abortion. Second, in my opinion, the number of Catholics who voted for President Donald Trump were guided mainly by that one issue. When the president reinstated the execution of prisoners, it no longer qualifies him as a "pro-life" leader in spite of nominating three Supreme Court judges.

All the actions undoing environmental safeguards, leaving the Paris Climate Agreement, exiting the World Health Organization are not pro-life moves. Treatment of families immigrating to the United States and name-calling of persons disagreeing with him are not expressions of dignity for life. Other social issues impact abortion, and they come under the umbrella of many of the Catholic social issues.

With a narrow view at only abortion concerns, it is easy to miss the larger picture and realize that many more die of hunger in the world. We are all complicit in those deaths. A broader view of life needs to guide our consciences.

KENNETH SERVAIS

Tularosa, New Mexico

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I appreciate the work done on this article about Catholics who voted for President Donald Trump and I can feel the struggle families experienced in making their choice. I know how difficult this choice must have been. It was also difficult for me.

However, there is a less apparent oversight the writer should have considered — the missing voices. Those missing voices have suffered unjustly and significantly more severely, especially in the waning days of the Trump administration. These are the elderly widows/widowers. Time and time again, our Catholic dioceses tend to overlook a vast portion of their flock that does not fit the typical "family" mold. It is almost as if the elder's now-single vocation does not exist. I know, because I am a widow who often feels marginalized.

Because many of these widows/widowers are often not able to come to church due to the extreme risk posed by COVID-19, it is easy to think they do not exist. Live streaming is an electronic advancement that has helped the elders to "feel" connected to their parish community, but that can only go so far. I would strongly suggest that as one's vocational state will naturally change over time, this segment of the population needs to be recognized by parishes and dioceses. I feel interviews of elder widows/widowers should have been included in any article that takes stock in how both Democrats and Republicans might move forward together.

JERILYN E. FELTON

Tigard, Oregon

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Lord help us. Can't Catholic Trump supporters see how they have been played? All he had to do is say he is pro-life and label government efforts to help the poor as socialism, and he had them. This effectively took half us Catholics away from the examples of Joseph in how to deal with a problem pregnancy and of Jesus and the apostles in how to deal with the poor and outcast.

The church has always had the means to attend to and deal with these two major problems: live our faith, follow the example of Joseph, Jesus and the apostles, rather than put our trust in Caesar — or President Donald Trump.

Can't the self-called pro-lifers see how narrow an anti-abortion law is? It is a law coming down only on women. And the way it is going, overturning *Roe* v. *Wade* seems unnecessary; many states have very strict and even punitive anti-abortion laws.

JIM LEIN

Minot, North Dakota

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Don Clemmer's article about the division and resignation Catholic Trump supporters are feeling hit the mark in describing the rationale that many of those voters had for voting for President Donald Trump, mostly based on their pro-life views.

What struck me in the article, though, was that there was little description of their feelings of dissatisfaction or even outrage regarding Trump's positions on other moral teachings of the Catholic Church. At least one of the people interviewed mentioned that the right to life is the predominant moral teaching of the Catholic Church, and that all the other rights flow from that. That is true, but it does not negate the need for people that are pro-life to speak out about the other moral teachings. Trump's behavior has been so immoral and so contrary to all of the other Catholic moral teachings that it is unfathomable for me to think about not speaking out about the immorality of so many things he says and does.

The article also says nothing about the difference between being morally pro-life and being politically pro-choice, and the complex decision making that is needed on this issue. Neither political party has done a good job describing the delicate balance between moral choice and civic liberty regarding abortion and I wish a future article would address that.

DONALD W. MOTT

Taylorsville, North Carolina

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This articled helped me to better understand the reasons that lead them to vote for President Donald Trump as they did and clarified the reasons I didn't.

I think the key is figuring out how to live in a pluralistic society — how to respect all those people who sincerely, often religiously, think and believe differently than we do. How to see that the rights guaranteed by the constitution are protected for all Americans — that is the question. The question also extends to how to balance the use of force wherein we oblige some of us under pain of incarceration to do as we believe and not how they believe.

With concerns as profound as these, when do we accept statements, often absurd on their face, as true when Trump cannot be trusted to tell the truth and further put him in a position to make decisions that affect the life and death of an entire country?

What greater failure of character can there be than this? So when we hear continuously from this person assertions that sound so praiseworthy though hyperbolic — I am the most (fill in the blank-patriotic, pro-life, intelligent, correct, blameless, etc.), how can we believe him?

This is but one issue that leads me and many to want a different person to lead our country.

It is perhaps also a starting point to discuss on what basis to choose a president.

GEORGE ECKENRODE

Phoenix, Arizona

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