Opinion



by NCR Staff

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President Joe Biden's "fiery" speech in front of Independence Hall on Labor Day weekend denounced Trumpism as a threat to the "very foundations of our republic." Following the speech, political columnist Michael Sean Winters writes that the cultlike allegiance to Donald Trump on the part of too many Americans — and Christians — not only threatens democracy, it is a perversion of the Gospel. Following are NCR reader responses to this column that have been edited for length and clarity.

I overall agree with the article. However, I think it is important to note that President Joe Biden made a very clear distinction between Republicans and MAGA Republicans. That is significant even though I believe it is something Biden would have preferred not to feel a need to say. Note that he reiterated the fact that he was not speaking of all Republicans.



Also, keep in mind that among Biden's greatest historical political strengths is/was his ability to negotiate — this is through 40-plus years in politics. His first "go to" was/is always to sit down and talk and continue until you can come to an agreement. This simply is not working, in many respects, in MAGA times.

SUSAN MULHEARN

Sunapee, New Hampshire

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Thank you for your important article on Donald Trump and the MAGA Republicans and their stain on our country. The only part of it where I have issue is "but how to unite the people around their own finest ideals and traditions when half the voters have sworn fealty to a cultlike figure."

I believe the MAGA part of the Republican party is a minority. Unfortunately, many of the other Republicans are cowering away from confronting them. Consequently, they have let their party be hijacked! I simply want to state that we as a country should not think that half our people belong to this cult, it's a much smaller, albeit

vocal, minority.

CRAIG NOWLIN

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

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Why can't Michael Sean Winters say "fascist"? Trumpism is fascism. Trumpists are fascists. It matters that Trumpism is a fascist phenomenon and that we identify it as such, because only mass struggle can defeat the Trumpist threat and the masses will not struggle unless we lay out what the stakes are.

Catholics and all people of goodwill who oppose Trumpism are called to engage in antifascist struggle by whatever nonviolent strategically sound means are available to them. This struggle can only be led by those who would be most affected by fascist rule and those who possess a correct analysis of Trumpism. Wealthy left-wing liberals like President Joe Biden are welcome to participate in and contribute to the struggle, but we would be foolish to look to them for leadership. Frankly, much of the blame for the rise of fascism in this country lands at their feet.

JEFFREY JONES

Hamburg, New York

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"Like Biden, I hope there is time and the will to preserve the best in our democracy. Like Gerson and Francis, I think it is the corruption of Christianity that is even more worrisome."

The distortion of Christian values by MAGA Christians is the root to their victimhood. Christ was never a victim. Sure, he complained and was reticent, but he plowed forward.

"If anyone follows Jesus with this kind of self-interest, he or she has taken the wrong path. The Lord demands a different attitude. To follow him does not mean to

become part of a court or a triumphal procession, or even to receive a lifetime insurance policy," the pope has said. "On the contrary, it means 'carrying one's cross' (Luke 14:27)."

Have the MAGA Christians "taken up their crosses"? No, they want someone else to carry it for them and throw that burden on everyone and everything else.

JANICE L. POSS

Claremont, California

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The salient point in Michael Sean Winters' excellent essay alludes to President Joe Biden's desire to preserve the best of our democracy but as Michael Gerson and Pope Francis have written there is a need to preserve Christianity and not allow it to become politicized.

The faithful have not been well served by many of our prelates who have forsaken neutrality in our political environment in favor of overt fealty to one side. They failed to recognize that Catholics, like Americans generally, reflect a diversity of backgrounds and opinions. In order to encourage the faithful to feel they are a part of a church which recognizes them for who they are, divisions along political lines need to be avoided.

Otherwise, there is a possibility they will become disillusioned about the church as an important part of their lives. There is also the possibility they will seek a stronger sense of belonging in a different faith tradition which seems to themselves to be more accepting.

Arguably, the same feelings of being left behind in a changing culture, a feeling which animates the Trumpites, is also found among some conservative Catholics who may not gravitate to the extremist wing. However, their feelings of being ignored at best and ridiculed at worst is something they may share with those who follow Trump.

If the leaders of our church overlook the many egregious statements and behaviors of Trump and other extremist conservatives regarding a spectrum of social issues while arguing about the most galvanic issues and ignoring all the others the church

will lose any credibility it might once have had. If our shepherds are to lead us along the pathways of moral decisions, then they must have credibility with their flock. The direction in which we are being led must not be defined by politics but by the best interests of ourselves and our country and that difference must be perceived by those in the pews.

CHARLES A. LE GUERN

Granger, Indiana

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