Opinion
Editorial



Former Vice President Mike Pence, a Republican presidential candidate, speaks June 23 at the Faith and Freedom Coalition's "Road to Majority" conference in Washington. Pence addressed Catholics gathered for the Napa Institute July 27 in Napa, California. (OSV News/Reuters/Elizabeth Frantz)

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When former Vice President Mike Pence addressed the Napa Institute's summer conference last month, he urged conservative Catholics to be courageous in bringing their faith into the public arena. By way of example, he told a story from his own career.

It was Jan. 5, 2021, and Pence had a meeting in the Oval Office with then-President Donald Trump.

"I'd always been loyal to President Donald Trump. He was my president and he was my friend. And I'll always be proud of the record of the Trump-Pence administration," the former vice president told the Napa attendees on July 27.

"The president had been told, though, that I had some authority to reject or return votes. No vice president in history had ever asserted that authority," he continued.

"I reminded him that we had both taken an oath to support and defend the Constitution of the United States, and I informed him one more time that I intended to keep my oath. I had no right to overturn the election," Pence said.

"It was a difficult conversation," he added. "The Bible says in Psalm 15, 'He keeps his oath even when it hurts.' I know something about that."

Five days after Pence's Napa address, the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia returned an indictment charging Trump with conspiring to subvert Joe Biden's victory in the presidential election. Federal prosecutors also accuse Trump of exploiting the violent Jan. 6 insurrection at the Capitol in an effort to cling to power.

The Washington grand jury that returned the indictment met for months, hearing testimony from many former Trump aides and White House officials. The 45-page indictment mentions Pence or the office of the vice presidency more than 100 times, with an entire section detailing how Trump tried to pressure Pence to overturn the election results — and how Pence repeatedly resisted, despite threats of violence "in the streets" and to Pence personally.

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Although there is much to criticize about Pence, the nation should be grateful that, despite his flaws, the vice president chose to do the right thing, both in January

2021—and in his testimony to the grand jury. If our democracy survives Trump, Pence will deserve some credit in the history books.

At Napa, Pence attributed his actions to his faith and to "those who have gone before."

Describing how he returned to his office after the "tense discussion" with Trump, Pence bowed his head and prayed "for the strength to do what I believe, what my oath required me to do — an oath I'd taken to not only to the American people but to almighty God, for it ended with a prayer, 'So help me God.' "

He also said he was inspired by portraits of Calvin Coolidge, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln and Theodore Roosevelt on his office walls. "I recalled that verse in the Book of Hebrews: 'Therefore since we're surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything hindered in the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.' "

"I've always believed that by God's grace the next day we did our duty, upholding the Constitution of the United States and the laws of this country in the peaceful transfer of power," he said.

It's true that for four years Pence was Trump's enabler, and after the November 2020 election, he remained quiet while his boss spread lies about the results. It wasn't until Jan. 15 — more than two months after Biden and Kamala Harris were declared the winners — that Pence called Harris to congratulate her.

But in the end, he did not do what Trump pleaded and ordered him to do, and instead allowed the certification of the election results for the winner, Joe Biden. For that, he is paying the price with Republican voters, with polling in the single digits in the GOP primary. Trump supporters boo and harangue him at campaign events.

That Napa audience was full of Republican voters, many of whom may have supported a Trump-Pence ticket in the past. They should heed the words of their keynote speaker.

"Now more than ever we need people of faith to live out their faith. We need people of conviction and faith to be willing to speak out and speak boldly," he said, adding, "We need people to step up and give voice to their values."

Hopefully those values include respect for democracy and for the truth.

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