Voices of Sisters

Social Justice



A Stop Project 2025 rally is held across from the Heritage Foundation Jan. 27 at Triangle Park in Washington, D.C. (Wikimedia Commons/Elvert Barnes Photography)



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I am a Catholic sister, and my blueprint for how I live my life is found in the Gospel of Matthew's Chapter 25, in which Jesus instructs his followers to feed the poor, help the sick and console prisoners. As a Sister of the Humility of Mary, I am also impelled to take an interest in how policies enacted by our government do or do not reflect my values.

So when Project 2025 first came to my attention, I was naturally curious. The document, written by the Heritage Foundation, a thinktank in Washington, offered its own blueprint in its case for a future presidential administration. I read it to see how it did or did not align with the long tradition of Catholic social justice.

What I found was disturbingly out of step with the teachings I hold dear, and since all the commentaries on Project 2025 I've seen lack the perspective of nuns, I thought I'd offer a few observations.

Our Catholic faith, as Matthew 25 suggests, teaches us we must care for each other. Food and health care are not privileges reserved for the wealthy, but universal rights that should be afforded to all people regardless of zip code. Project 2025's authors, by contrast, want to prevent those who are poor from accessing health care or food.

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Its plans for Medicaid, the federal medical insurance program for lower-income Americans, include passing work requirements, "targeted premiums" and other cost-saving measures that can only result in the loss of services for some. On page 303 of the massive document, it proposes getting rid of summer school lunch programs in poor communities, saying, "Currently, students can get meals from schools even if they are not in summer school, which has, in effect, turned school meals into a federal catering program."

If they are scandalized by a food program being operated out of schools, the authors of Project 2025 seem equally opposed to promoting learning through early education. On page 482, they write simply, "Eliminate the Head Start program."

Catholic social teaching also promotes the dignity and rights of workers. It calls for an inclusive economy that places people over profit and ensures that we all have what we need to thrive. Project 2025 proposes reversing federal investments that support families and dismantling worker protections, prioritizing corporate interests at the expense of everyone's economic security.

Pope Francis' teachings reaffirm many Christians' belief that care for our common home is central to our faith. All people should live in communities where we are able to breathe clean air, drink clean water and have a safe, healthy, stable place to live. Project 2025 makes a priority of fossil fuel corporate profits over addressing climate change. It calls for reversing climate initiatives and gutting environmental regulations.

The Catholic Church teaches us that we must welcome the stranger in our midst and, also, affirms that we all have a right to migrate to seek safety and a future for ourselves and our families. We know that our immigration system must value the dignity of all people — no matter their country of origin. Project 2025 sees all immigrants, even if they are already integral parts of our communities, as a threat to the country. It calls for dismantling our immigration system and deporting millions of our neighbors.

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Catholic social teaching insists upon every person's right to live in safety from the threats of discrimination and violence, especially gun violence, and create a safer and freer world. Project 2025 calls for dismantling gun safety laws and, consequently, values gun manufacturers' profits over our own safety.

As a Catholic sister, I believe that all people are created in the image and likeness of God. My faith calls me to ensure that all LGBTQ+ community members are free from discrimination. Project 2025 aims to repeal funding for mental health care and rolls back hard-won civil rights protections.

Our Catholic faith affirms that every person has the freedom and responsibility to be active participants in creating a just and equitable country by exercising our sacred duty to vote. As a Catholic sister and a lawyer, I know all too well about the long struggle for voting rights in our country. The fight is not over. By eliminating the Department of Justice's civil rights division, which safeguards voting rights, Project 2025 aims to effectively end the freedom and right to vote for many people.

In sum, Project 2025 is an extremist plan designed to privilege a small, white, wealthy ruling class and their corporate interests, while burdening everyone else. The result would be a society in which millions of us, our families and our communities, would face economic hardship and barriers to democratic participation.

The principles of Catholic social justice have long shaped the life and ministries of Catholic sisters in this country. The call to pursue Gospel justice with our whole hearts has guided our lives, moved us to the peripheries of society and challenged us to care for all of our siblings. Indeed, it led to the founding of Network, the social justice advocacy organization where I minister.



Humility of Mary Sr. Eilis McCulloh, a grassroots education and organizing specialist with Network Advocates for Catholic Social Justice, speaks at the U.S Capitol July 23 during the announcement of the Nuns on the Bus & Friends "Vote Our Future" tour. (Courtesy of Network)

Read this next: Nuns on the Bus to launch eighth tour in September

My Network colleagues and I were moved by Project 2025 to create a resource that lifts up our Catholic social justice tradition and to launch our first Nuns on the Bus in-person tour in six years. The nonpartisan Nuns on the Bus & Friends "Vote Our Future" tour will visit 20 cities in 11 states from Sept. 30 to Oct. 18. Its stops will include rallies, town halls and site visits to organizations doing the work of social justice in their communities.

The goal is not to push our belief system on people, but to serve as a reminder to all of us of the sacred power of participation in our democratic process.

Matthew 25 reminds us that "whatever you did for the least of my brothers and sisters, you did to me." Though every person is free to follow (or not follow) any faith

or spiritual practice they choose, I believe our country is richer when we come together as faith and justice seekers no matter our traditions.

This story appears in the **Election 2024** feature series. View the full series.