Opinion

Guest Voices



A supporter of Democratic presidential nominee U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris reacts to early election results at an Election Night rally at Howard University in Washington Nov. 6, 2024. (OSV News/Reuters/Daniel Cole)



Daryl Grigsby

View Author Profile

Black Catholic Messenger

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. Learn more

November 25, 2024

Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

Typically, how a person votes, what motivates their vote, and assumptions about voters can be uncertain pursuits. In the case of our recent election, however, there are some issues that must be discussed. As an African American, I found the comments, behavior, allegations, policies and platform of the president-elect and his vice president to be dangerous, offensive, and, in many cases, racist.

As a Catholic, I feel the assaults on human dignity, the capitalizing on fears, the demonization of "others," the outright lies, and his not-so-subtle comments justifying violence against former congresswoman Liz Cheney and others are contrary to our tradition of human respect, peace, and justice.

It has been reported that 54% of all Catholic voters cast their ballots for Donald Trump. They key element of this majority is that around 60% of White Catholics voted that way.

If years ago you voted for Nixon, the Bushes or Reagan, I may not have agreed, but this is far different. I recently completed Dr. Anthony Fauci's book *On Call: A Doctor's Journey in Public Service*. He includes a tribute to George W. Bush for his assertive campaign to treat HIV/AIDs in Africa. Fauci notes Bush's program perhaps saved as many as 25 million lives. That level of global solidarity or compassion is completely missing from the incoming administration.

Trump has talked openly of mass deportations, vengeance on his opponents, "traumatizing" federal employees, pardoning violent capitol rioters, pardoning himself, defunding schools that teach "critical race theory," dismantling the Environmental Protection Agency, and other ghastly policies. Already, some of his supporters are sending African Americans emails about returning to the plantation and, in some places, yelling to girls and women, "We own your bodies."

Advertisement

When I read the scriptures, there is Jesus, God become flesh, dining with the outcasts and "sinners." His mother proclaims a God who "lifts up the lowly." When I go to Mass, the Eucharist declares we are one body in Christ. When I read documents approved by 90% of the world's bishops at the Second Vatican Council, I see the following:

> [The Council,] guide to the faith of all God's people, gathered together by Christ, can find no more eloquent expression of this people's solidarity, respect and love for the whole human family, of which it forms part, than to enter into dialogue with it about all these various problems, throwing the light of the Gospel on them and supplying humanity with the saving resources which the church has received from its founder under the promptings of the Holy Spirit. (Gaudium et spes, 3)

There is nothing in the incoming administration that even remotely reflects any of the above. Frankly, and I say this with all humility, I am afraid that for many white Catholics, their race, their nation, their privileges, their fears and their biases have obscured their Catholic faith.

I am not swayed by the "single-issue" vote regarding abortion, alleged fears about the economy, or other issues. From my perspective, votes for the incoming ticket are overlooking a level of racism, misogyny, violent undertones and nationalism that are quite simply frightening. From my perspective, the "right to life" movement spends more time on making abortion illegal than creating a society where abortion is not felt necessary. It is a sad irony that the states with the most restrictive abortion laws are also those with the flimsiest social safety nets for women and babies.

> Frankly, and I say this with all humility, I am afraid that for many white Catholics, their race, their nation, their privileges, their fears and their biases have obscured their Catholic faith.

> Tweet this

I wonder what the prophet Jeremiah, St. Óscar Romero, Servants of God Thea Bowman and Dorothy Day, Fr. Thomas Merton, Bishop Thomas Gumbleton, and

others would say about the words and deeds of our incoming president. How is it possible that a man who bragged about grabbing women's private parts, who is engaged in numerous "hush money" cases to pay off accusers, and who has been convicted of felonies, is considered a moral choice for the majority of white American Catholics?

I also question the Catholic hierarchy's role in this. Cardinal Timothy Dolan of New York was seen laughing and palling around with Trump at the Al Smith Dinner, and publicly criticized Vice President Kamala Harris for not attending. To my knowledge, he and many other bishops have said nothing about the overtly racist, violent and untrue comments from the incoming president on various matters. This silent complicity with overt immorality is unbecoming of a hierarchy whose calling to leadership and holiness is paramount to their office.

I understand we have the freedom to vote for who we want. Yet, in some cases, a vote is no longer merely political or partisan but is moral, ethical, and, in this case, a matter of life and death. Many conservative Catholics have no problem telling Catholics who vote Democratic that they are not "Catholic."

I believe the demands of justice, righteousness, and, in fact, the Gospel of Jesus Christ, require us all to ask serious questions about who represents a "Catholic" voice in the political and moral arena — especially now.

A version of this story appeared in the **Dec. 20, 2024-Jan. 16, 2025** print issue.