Opinion

Guest Voices



Sun shines through a statue of Jesus Christ on a grave marker alongside an American flag at St. Mary Catholic Cemetery in Appleton, Wisconsin, in this 2018 photo. (OSV News/Bradley Birkholz)



by Valerie Schultz

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What would our country look like if actual Christians were actually to run the U.S. government? Humor me in this vision of the holy Gospel in action.

Christian nationalism in the United States has gotten a lot of press recently. I'm a (Catholic) Christian and therefore an interested party in this debate, so I wanted to know more about this political movement.

I came across a helpful definition of Christian nationalism in a 2021 article in Christianity Today: "Christian nationalism is the belief that the American nation is defined by Christianity, and that the government should take active steps to keep it that way."

Concise and perhaps overly broad, but perplexing. We Americans learn in grade school that the United States of America was not founded as a Christian nation and is not defined by Christianity. These are historical facts. According to our Constitution, it is illegal to force citizens to practice or abide by a state-sanctioned religion. A significant number of Americans are not Christian and would not consent to a government based on Christian nationalism.

But, again, I am trying to imagine what this nation would look like if actual Christians were in charge on Capitol Hill and at the White House. Let's pretend we're on a mission from God.



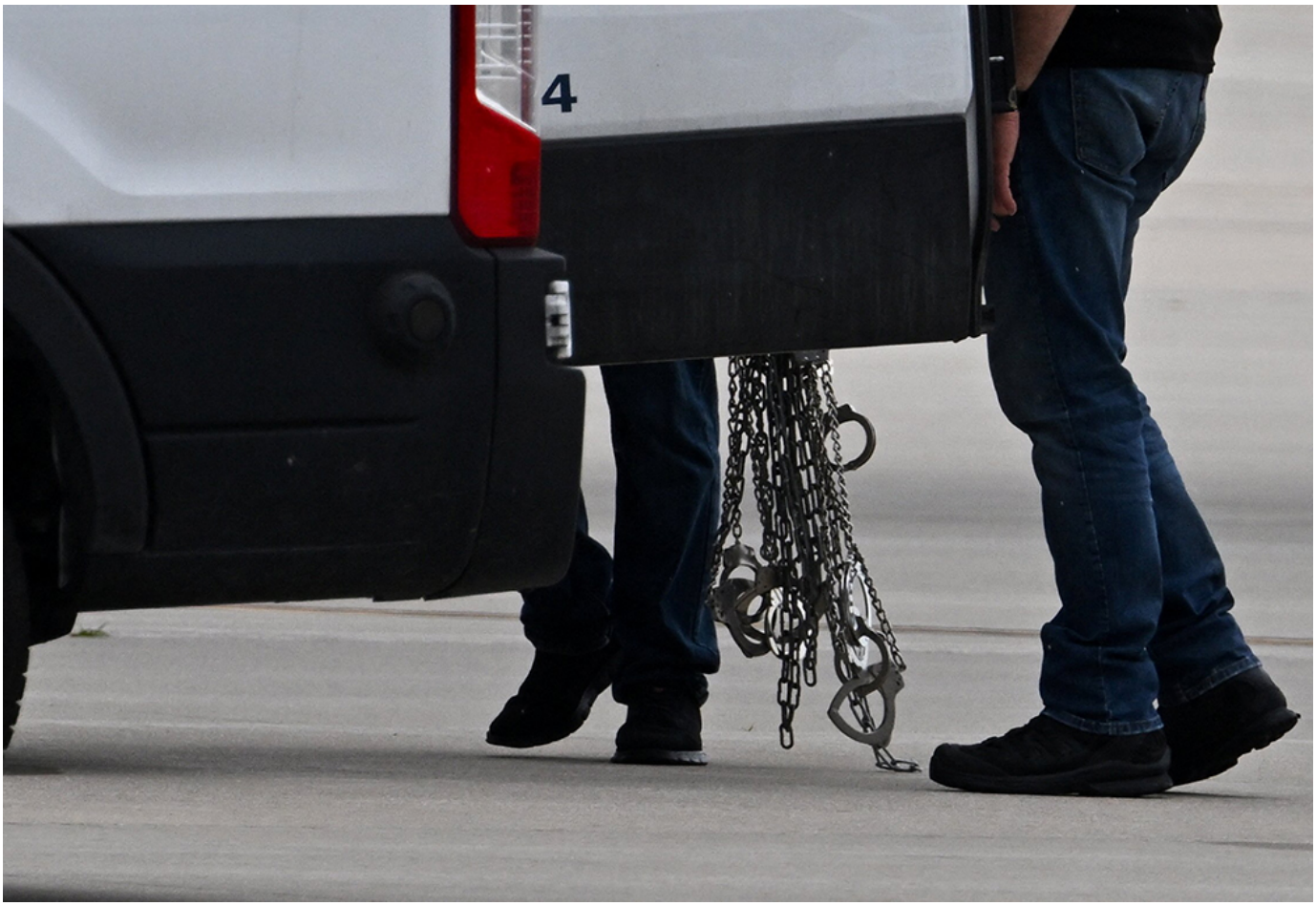
Volunteers are pictured in a file photo serving people in need during a free dinner provided by the Emergency Assistance Department of Chicago Catholic Charities. "Feeding the hungry is a fundamental work of mercy, and Christians serious about their faith would establish programs that would guarantee food to hungry people," writes Valerie Schultz. (OSV News/Reuters/Jim Young)

A Christian worldview would dictate that children would not go hungry on our watch. Feeding the hungry is a fundamental work of mercy, and Christians serious about their faith would establish programs that would guarantee food to hungry people, either through well-stocked food banks or a guaranteed basic income or both. School lunches would be fully funded, as would federal assistance programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP, and Head Start. We produce enough food that no one should ever starve.

Christians are called to provide drink to the thirsty. In a truly Christian nation, no one would be harmed by polluted water. Drinking water would be as pure as possible, using whatever water treatment methods were indicated. There would be no lead in

anyone's water, not to mention any other harmful chemicals or industrial by-products. No one's water would catch fire as it comes from the tap. Rivers, lakes and oceans would be pristine. Since care for God's creation is a biblical command, this clean water supply would be funded by a Christian Department of the Interior and Environmental Protection Agency.

"I was a stranger and you welcomed me," said Jesus to his disciples, and manifesting this work of mercy would be the opposite of the vicious deportation policy currently in effect in our country. A Christian immigration plan would find the ways and means to accommodate all who come to our borders in search of safety, prosperity and shelter from the storms of their native places. Welcoming the stranger is a time-honored Judeo-Christian command. Incarcerating the stranger and/or denying them the due process of law is both unchristian and un-American.



Handcuffs are carried after being removed from detained migrants who boarded a plane after being transferred from an ICE detention facility, at Gary/Chicago International Airport, in Gary, Indiana, June 20, 2025. (OSV News/Reuters/Dylan Martinez)

Clothing the naked is another Christian directive. In addition to adequate clothing, this work of mercy would assure that everyone is safely housed. In a proper Christian nation, no one would be living on the street, exposed to the elements, and endangered by frostbite or extreme heat. Since, in theory, every person on the planet would fit in Texas if it had New York City's density, we know that we have plenty of room and ample materials to provide for everyone. But the nation would have to be Christian enough to follow God's will instead of obeying our individual selfish desires to hoard our goods and build fences around our neighborhoods.

In a decent Christian society, basic health care would be a right rather than a privilege. Caring for the sick is an essential work of mercy, which is why many of our hospital systems have saints' names: They were founded by Catholic sisters. With universal health care, no one would go bankrupt due to bills they could not possibly pay back in their lifetime due to being uninsured or underinsured by unscrupulous private insurance companies. No one would die unmourned in our streets. No one would be denied treatment for a preexisting condition or because there were no beds available. Medicare for all would be a righteous Christian start.

With a Christian mandate, the federal prison system would give precedence to rehabilitation and training programs. The point of a prison sentence would not be punitive, but rehabilitative. Only the most incorrigible and/or violent offenders would be housed separately for the good of society. Prisoners would benefit from appropriate access to visits and communication with family members, as well as educational and therapeutic opportunities. Every facility's goal would be to help prisoners get parole and reintegrate into society successfully.

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These upright Christian programs would be very expensive, which is why high tax burdens would be placed on the shoulders of the very wealthy. If a person has more money than they could possibly spend in their time on this earth, a good Christian would not be comfortable holding onto such wealth while others were going without basic necessities. Charity is not optional for Christians.

If my imagined Christian nation is sounding like socialism, consider the organization of the early church, as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles: "All who believed were

together and had all things in common; they would sell their property and possessions and divide them among all according to each one's need." This came about after the Holy Spirit inflamed the hearts of the early followers of Jesus. Surely Christian nationalists are similarly inspired today.

If Christian nationalists profess a belief in Christianity and a commitment to love of God and love of neighbor, if they mean to reflect the face of God and advocate for the enactment of the teachings of Jesus Christ, it seems we're going to need a rewrite of Project 2025.