Opinion
NCR Voices



White House border czar Tom Homan looks on during a news conference along the border with Mexico Dec. 13 in San Diego. The MAGA-aligned Catholics for Catholics has named Homan "Protector of America." (AP/Gregory Bull)



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In its latest act of sacrilege, the nationalist group Catholics for Catholics is presenting U.S. border czar Tom Homan with the "Protector of America Award."

The award is to be presented Jan. 22 by conspiracy theorist Lt. Gen. Michael Flynn and will feature a blessing from the removed and disgraced Bishop Joseph Strickland, formerly of Tyler, Texas.

Strickland was fired from his position as the leader of the Diocese of Tyler by Pope Francis in 2023. He once posted on Twitter that Francis was "undermining the Deposit of Faith." He has also called synodality "garbage" and endorsed a video that attacked Francis as a "diabolically disoriented clown."

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According to the Catholics for Catholics event website, the blessing "is given under the intercession and protection of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Patroness of the Americas, in recognition of rescuing 62,000 migrant children from human trafficking and restoring law and order in America."

There is no evidence that the Trump administration rescued more than 62,000 migrant children. There is no evidence or credence to the claim that Homan "restored law and order in America." Crime in the U.S. has been gradually decreasing since 2021, a factor that experts say is related to the nation's recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

But Catholics for Catholics doesn't let the facts get in the way of a good story. President and CEO John Yep claimed that Trump was the "rightful winner" of the 2020 presidential election, and proclaimed Trump to be the "only Catholic option" during the 2024 presidential election.

Yep has been unapologetic in the hubris of his audacious goal to "reclaim" the word "Catholic" and seize it for himself and the MAGA agenda.

Catholics for Catholics has dutifully promoted that MAGA agenda, with Strickland as a close collaborator. In March, the organization hosted what my colleague Michael Sean Winters called a "schismatic gala" at Trump's home in Mar-a-Lago. Strickland not only attended the gala, but led the room in adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.

"What happened at Mar-a-Lago on March 19 was not patriotic and it wasn't Catholic. It was idolatrous and it was appalling," Winters wrote.

In March 2024, the organization hosted a prayer gathering for Trump at his home in Mar-a-Lago which featured Homan as a speaker.

Homan, who is Catholic, is being honored by Catholics for Catholics despite holding multiple political positions directly contradictory to church teaching.

Homan was a ferocious advocate and architect of the first Trump administration's family separation policy. During Trump's second term, he has been the main animator of the aggressive ICE crackdown besieging the nation. Homan was a staunch supporter of the inhumane migrant concentration camp Alligator Alcatraz. He has defended the shooting of Renee Good by an ICE agent. He even defended Trump after the president called Somali migrants "garbage." He continues to be a central figure in the implementation of Project 2025.

Homan choosing his politics over his faith is nothing new. In November, Homan announced that "the Catholic Church is wrong" in response to the USCCB's special message decrying the Trump administration's immigration policies. Apparently he hasn't read the Gospel.



Bishop Joseph Strickland, then head of the Diocese of Tyler, Texas, walks in a procession in Los Angeles June 16, 2023, to protest the Los Angeles Dodgers honoring the "Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence" drag group during the team's LGBTQ+ Pride Night at Dodger Stadium. (OSV News/Kirby Lee-USA TODAY Sports via Reuters)

A Catholic organization honoring Homan is a moral disgrace. A Catholic bishop imparting his blessing on a man responsible for such wanton destruction and desolation is a profound scandal. Even more egregious is the co-opting of Our Lady of Guadalupe — a beloved Marian apparition known for her particular closeness with those on the margins — in a manner that would baptize the immoral, unlawful and anti-Catholic actions of ICE. It is anathema.

Our Lady of Gudalupe is the patroness of the Americas — not the United States of America. Devotion to the image is particularly popular among Hispanic Catholics, and has become an important cultural and spiritual refuge for immigrants. The image of Our Lady is the manifestation of the unity, justice and equality that God

desires for this hemisphere — and beyond.

Is not Our Lady of Guadalupe the same Mary who proclaimed in the Magnificat that God "has cast down the mighty from their thrones" and "the rich he has sent away empty"?

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There is no part of the Gospel that could possibly justify what Homan has done to immigrants in this country, but to use Mary is both insulting and theologically laughable.

There is either a dearth of spiritual literacy or irony in the Trump administration and Catholics for Catholics. Perhaps both.

Some might argue that the most Christian thing we can do is to pray for someone in their hour of need. That might indeed be theologically correct. But until he changes his ways, there is only one acceptable prayer for Homan: "Repent, turn away from sin, and be faithful to the Gospel." I doubt that's in Strickland's draft.

This story appears in the **Immigration and the Church** feature series. View the full series.