News



With Marine Two in the background, Vice President JD Vance speaks with reporters upon arriving at Joint Base Andrews, Md., Thursday, May 28, 2026. (AP Pool/Matt Rourke)

Meg Kinnard

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Mike Catalini

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Vice President JD Vance, a convert to Catholicism whose faith has been central to his adult life, writes about his religious journey in a new book that could ultimately serve as a sort of origin story for a future presidential campaign.

"Communion: Finding My Way Back to Faith" comes out Tuesday from Harper, and The Associated Press obtained a copy ahead of its release. The HarperCollins imprint also put out "Hillbilly Elegy," the best-selling memoir from 2016 that helped make Vance a national figure.

Vance has been working on and off on his new book since then, a tumultuous decade that included a Hollywood movie about his youth, a short stint as a U.S. senator from Ohio and now vice president to Donald Trump.

There's not a lot about Trump or other insider stories from Vance's political years, although he does express regret for criticizing the Democratic Party's "childless cat ladies," a comment that came back to haunt him while Trump's running mate.

Instead, "Communion" serves as a sort of manifesto for the role of religion in public life. Vance writes about transitioning from Protestant Christianity to atheism to Catholicism, and he credits his faith with giving him a sense of purpose he didn't get through his education at Yale University or working in the financial industry.

The book hits shelves less than five months before the midterm elections that will shape the final two years of Trump's second presidency. The midterms will also mark the unofficial start of the next presidential campaign, in which Vance is expected to be a contender.

Vance recalled 'fusion' between religion and politics

Vance wrote how he witnessed "the fusion between Republican politics and the Christianity of my youth." At that time, Vance wrote, "I heard a fair amount about the evils of abortion and homosexuality," as well as then-President Bill Clinton's

"rumored moral failings."

Alongside these religious observations, Vance said he felt he was "starting to witness the beginning of a fissure in the Republican Party: between its business elites and its religious rank and file." That's something, Vance went on, that would "eventually lead to my election as vice president."

Vance's grandmother — his mamaw, as he calls her — was a central figure in his life, and her death led to an atrophying of his Christianity.

"With her gone, no one really cared about my faith, and soon I stopped caring, too," he wrote. Christianity became "completely irrelevant" to him, including when he served in Iraq in the Marine Corps.

At the end of his service in 2006, Vance wrote that he "was no longer, in any real sense, a Christian."

A near-death experience helped shape Vance's faith

Returning to his military base after his grandmother's funeral, Vance wrote that he lost control of his car on a rain-slicked road, but inexplicably stopped before hurtling into a guardrail and potentially over the side of a mountain.

He said it was "the closest I've ever come to a supernatural experience," and the feeling remained "even during my later years as a strident atheist."

As his military service wrapped up, a colleague introduced Vance to the work of author Ayn Rand, whose notion of the virtuousness of selfishness stood "in as stark opposition to Christian morality as anything I'd ever read." This notion appealed to Vance, he wrote, noting that Rand's philosophy "filled a void left by the faith I'd discarded" and that he became a "self-professed atheist and meritocrat."

"I didn't care about God's will," he wrote. "I cared about my own."

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'I will marry this girl'

Immediately struck by his now-wife Usha Vance, the vice president wrote that he told a friend he thought he was "obsessed" with her while they were in law school together. He praised her intensity, intelligence and curiosity.

"I will marry this girl," he wrote. "Or I will be a lifelong bachelor."

He also wrote how their discussion about death, sparked by Joan Didion's "The Year of Magical Thinking," highlighted their different views on the afterlife — she was worried by it and he wasn't, even in his atheist years.

"Usha, like Didion, dreaded neither the 'loss of heaven' nor 'the pains of hell' for the most logical of reasons: She simply didn't think they exist. I came to believe in both, but I still didn't find either particularly motivating," he wrote.

Peter Thiel was a turning point

In the midst of this, Vance wrote that he attended a talk by Peter Thiel, a Silicon Valley investor who would become one of Vance's early political backers. He was impressed by Thiel's discussion of hypercompetition among professionals, accompanied by "technological stagnation."

"Possibly the smartest person I'd ever met, he identified very openly as a Christian," Vance wrote, adding that Thiel "defied the simple social template I had constructed — that dumb people were religious and smart people were atheists."

'Hillbilly Elegy,' Trump and fame

Initially skeptical his first book would be successful, Vance described how an interview he gave in the summer of 2016 about "the sense that the hillbillies had been left behind by the leaders of a country" caught fire, dovetailing with Trump's campaign that year.

"I became a controversial figure in my own right, and I tasted my first bit of heated public criticism," he wrote.

Vance said he was "tempted by the flexibility" of "being a public intellectual," although he would choose a different path.

Vance converted to Catholicism

The future vice president recalled visiting a French cathedral in 2018 with his wife, Usha, and young son, Ewan.

Reflecting on how the Catholic Church had endured over the years, his ambivalence about religion began to fade. He writes that he felt "a distinct sense of belonging and presence."

He was baptized a year later, writing that he enjoyed the "work" required to become Catholic — readings and discussion.

The vetting process for vice president was intense

Vance wrote that he figured it was a "long shot" for Trump to choose him as vice president.

"When his staff told me I was on the short list, I almost thought it was a prank call," Vance wrote.

He recalled the in-person interview the most fascinating part of the vetting process, which included being asked if he had ever cheated on his wife.

"I haven't, but I assume people who have don't just admit it to a stranger?" he responded.

The transition to the ticket was difficult for his family, he wrote, particularly his eldest child.

He told Charlie Kirk, the young conservative activist who founded Turning Point USA and was assassinated last year, about the struggle.

"Don't try to convince your son it's not a sacrifice," Kirk said.

Regretting the 'cat ladies' comment

Vance's penchant for stirring controversy came up again during the campaign.

Critics resurfaced his 2021 remarks that the Democratic Party was run by "childless cat ladies."

Vance now concedes that his comment was "boneheaded" and "one of the dumbest things I ever said."

"Aside from enraging a great number of people," Vance added, "it had the added benefit of distracting from the actual point I wanted to make, which was that our society is becoming pathologically hostile to having kids."

Is this Vance's pre-2028 presidential campaign memoir?

The book's release likely serves to ramp up speculation that Vance will seek the presidency in 2028. That's a possibility the Republican vice president has said he's not focused on right now, indicating he'd wait until after the 2026 midterm elections to decide on a campaign.

Presidential hopefuls often release books before launching a campaign, giving them a moment in the spotlight before new audiences and a chance to crystallize their message before embarking on a campaign.

Already, potential 2028 candidates on the Democratic side have recently published books or will do so soon, including Kentucky Gov. Andy Beshear, Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro, California Gov. Gavin Newsom and former Vice President Kamala Harris.