

[Opinion](#)
[Guest Voices](#)



U.S. Rep. Jim McGovern, second from the left, stops with a congressional delegation in August 2019 at Central American University in San Salvador where six murdered Jesuit priests who influenced his work and faith are buried. McGovern led the delegation to El Salvador to study causes of migration. (CNS/Courtesy of Rep. Jim McGovern)



by Jim McGovern

[View Author Profile](#)

[Join the Conversation](#)

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. [Learn more](#)

October 21, 2026

[Share on Bluesky](#)[Share on Facebook](#)[Share on Twitter](#)[Email to a friend](#)[Print](#)

Listen to Republican pundits long enough and you might think being Catholic requires voting Republican. It does not.

Millions of Americans across the political spectrum have views shaped by our faith. For many of us, the values that make us Catholic are precisely why we are Democrats. It's time we stop letting cynical right-wing politicians define our faith for us — and start speaking for ourselves.

The good news is that's already happening.

Take James Talarico, who has captured America's attention by showing that Democrats can speak openly about values rooted in the teachings of Jesus — even in deep-red Texas. He's treated like an outlier. He shouldn't be.

People crave authenticity. My constituents don't want focus group talking points about "values." They want to know what actually shapes my values, my politics and my moral compass.

For me, that's my Catholic faith.

I'm a progressive Democrat because of my faith — not in spite of it. And I think it's time more of us said so.

My relationship with the church is complicated. As a young man, I drifted away from the church. For me, Catholicism had begun to feel like ritual and routine — disconnected dogma that did nothing to address the suffering and injustice I saw all around me.

Then, as a congressional staffer working for Congressman Joe Moakley of South Boston, I traveled to El Salvador in the 1980s. I met Jesuit priests and the Maryknoll Sisters who stood with the poor, defended human rights, and risked their lives standing with the oppressed. In doing so, they inspired me and restored my

relationship with the church.

Most importantly, they taught me that faith requires action. It demands something of us. "Feed the hungry" means feed the hungry. "Welcome the stranger" means welcome the stranger. Defend the vulnerable. Stand against injustice. Treat every human being with dignity.

Their understanding of faith shaped not just who I am — but how I vote.

Tragically, many of the people whose example inspired me in El Salvador were persecuted and even murdered for living out those values. Their courage remains a powerful reminder that the Gospel is not supposed to be comfortable. It asks something of us.

Too often, Catholic Democrats shy away from talking about our faith this way. That is a mistake. We have ceded too much moral ground to right-wing extremists who have distorted Christianity into something I barely recognize.

I believe that faith is measured not by how loudly we proclaim it or by how often we go to church, but by how we serve others.

Advertisement

I don't believe faith is measured by how loudly we proclaim it or how often politicians invoke God in speeches. I believe it is measured by how we treat one another — especially those with the least power.

Politicians who understand Christ's command to feed the hungry would not cut nutrition assistance for hungry families.

Leaders who say every life has value would not rip healthcare away from working people or leave families crushed by medical debt.

A faith rooted in peace is incompatible with bombing a school in Iran or funding a genocide in Gaza.

The Bible tells us to welcome the stranger. Instead, families are being torn apart and immigrants are being deported to countries with horrific human rights records.

Jesus stood with the poor and warned repeatedly about the corrupting power of wealth. Yet Republicans have taken from people with the least to give even more to those with the most.

At its core, government should be about helping people. It is what we do together to make life a little better, a little fairer, and a little more dignified for our families, our neighbors, and the generations that come after us.

[Related:](#) [Trump's deportation crackdown may influence how Catholics vote in midterms](#)

My faith tells me to act. And if Democrats win back the House and I become chairman of the Rules Committee, that's what I intend to do.

I'll fight to end the killing in the Middle East and put human rights back at the center of American foreign policy.

I'll demand justice for families torn apart and for victims of ICE abuse.

I'll fight corruption and the greed that has infected our politics.

And I'll work to pass Medicare for All and build a country where everyone has a roof over their head and a healthy meal on the table — because food, healthcare and housing are human rights. In the richest country in human history, nobody should struggle just to survive.

Those aren't simply political positions for me. They are matters of faith.

And if your faith tells you that human dignity is sacred, and that government has a moral responsibility to protect the vulnerable, fight injustice and stand with the oppressed, then I hope you'll join me in speaking up.

Our country, our freedom, and our faith are on the ballot this November.

[Read this next:](#) [Catholic sister challenges JD Vance over ICE tactics, treatment of immigrants](#)

This story appears in the **2026 Midterm Elections** feature series. [View the full series.](#)