News



President Donald Trump speaks to reporters before boarding Marine One on the South Lawn of the White House, Thursday, Oct. 22, 2026, in Washington. (AP/Julia Demaree Nikhinson)



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Less than two weeks ahead of midterm elections, a group of Catholic bishops joined President Donald Trump at the White House, praying over him during a prayer meeting in the Oval Office, seen in a video shared on social media.

Trump's campaign X account and a White House communications staffer posted a video on Thursday, Oct. 22, that shows a number of Catholic bishops, including Denver Archbishop James Golka, praying over President Donald Trump in the Oval Office.

Communications adviser Margo Martin posted a video to her X account with the caption, "Catholic Archbishops and Bishops pray with President Trump in the Oval Office ❤." Martin serves as a special assistant to the president and a communications adviser.

The Denver Archdiocese confirmed the meeting took place in a statement to Denver Catholic on Thursday afternoon.

"With respect for the office of the president, the Archdiocese of Denver welcomes continued conversation on the sanctity of life, from conception to natural death, and the God-given dignity of every person," it said. "We invite the faithful to pray for our nation and its leaders, trusting in Christ's mercy and guidance."

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In the video, Trump is seated while several bishops stand around him, some resting a hand on him in a gesture of prayer or blessing. Also standing nearby is Paula White-Cain, a longtime Trump spiritual adviser and senior adviser to the White House Faith Office.

Golka, standing to the president's right, leads the prayer, thanking God for the nation, its government and the presidency.

"We lift up our president today, ask your blessing upon him," Golka said. He also invokes Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, asking the Spirit to "surround our country" and "protect us against any influence of evil."

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) told the National Catholic Reporter it had no role in arranging the gathering.

"This was not something that the USCCB organized. It is not affiliated with the Conference. I have no further information," spokesperson Chieko Noguchi told NCR.

"This is clearly an attempt to hijack the message coming from the leaders of the USCCB and from the senior bishops in the conference who sent messages saying we shouldn't look partisan and we should not send messages that politicize inappropriately our position," Massimo Faggioli, a professor of historical theology at Villanova University, told NCR.

Faggioli said that bishops in any modern democracy should not appear to bless partisan politics, and said that it was even "more egregious" that some bishops posed with Trump, given his clashes with Pope Leo XIV and other church leaders in recent months.

"It reminds me of what Pope Francis said about Patriarch Kirill of Moscow," Faggioli said, referring to a statement Francis made in 2022, when he warned the Russian Orthodox patriarch not to become "Putin's altar boy."

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"I think some bishops just want to be downgraded to 'Oval Office bishops' and it's not good for them," Faggioli added.

The identities of the other bishops shown, the timing of the gathering and whether any broader church organization was involved could not be independently confirmed.

The video circulated just 12 days before the Nov. 3 midterm elections, when Catholic voters face competing concerns over immigration, economic pressures and social welfare.

An October Pew Research Center survey found that 42% of Catholic registered voters favored Democratic House candidates and 39% favored Republicans, with 19% undecided or supporting another candidate.

In an Oct. 14 statement ahead of the midterm elections, bishops' conference president Archbishop Paul Coakley of Oklahoma City urged Catholics to "put their faith before politics," emphasizing that the church's role in public life is neither political nor partisan, and calling on voters to judge candidates by their actions and their commitment to the common good.

This story has been updated since publication to attribute Golka's quote and to add reaction.

This story appears in the **2026 Midterm Elections** feature series. View the full series.