

Christian Morality and Voting Choices

By Tarcisio Beal

Among the betrayals of the best traits of American democracy, as well as those of the fundamentals of Christian morality as exemplified by Jesus, are the political stance and actions of right-wing Catholics who support and have now joined the administration of President Donald J. Trump. **Brian Burch**, president of the political advocacy group *CatholicVote.org*, is now Trump's Ambassador to the Vatican, despite the fact that he was a critic of Pope Francis and of "progressive Catholics" publicly stating that "we need to be bold in defending the faith." He criticized "*Synodality*"

(the ongoing gathering at the Roman Curia of thousands of Catholic leaders and activists, clergymen, males and females, to discuss how the Church can best follow the example of Jesus) and said that the Pope's pursuit of God's Kingdom was "merely a ruse" (a trick). Already on November 23, 2024, Burch accused Pope Francis of "creating massive confusion in the Church by authorizing the liturgical blessing of same sex relationships" (cf. Heidi Schlumpf, "Brian Burch, critic of Pope Francis," *National Catholic Reporter*; April 25- May 8, 2025, pp. 1, 8, 9).

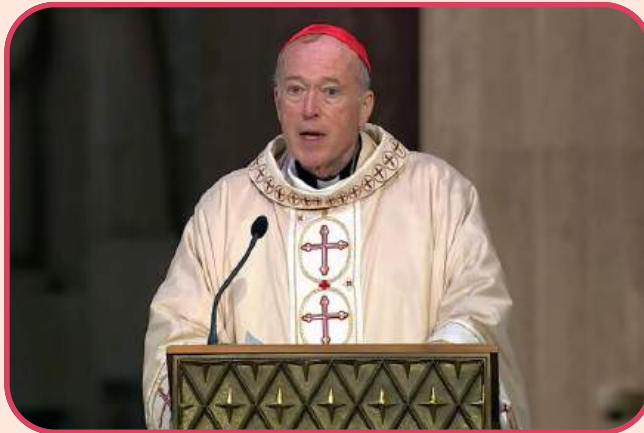
Quite a number of conservative Catholics who object to the direction of the new Church of Vatican II and the decisions of Pope Francis have joined the Trump Administration, including Vice President J. D. Vance, Marco Rubio, the Secretary of State who now occupies three other major federal posts, and Robert F. Kennedy Jr., head of the National Health Administration. RFK Jr. is badly contradicting the record of both his grandfather, Joseph Patrick Kennedy, Sr. and his own father Robert F. Kennedy, Sr., who gave their lives for the democratic ideals of the nation. As head of the Department of Health and Human Resources, RFK Jr. has opposed vaccination against measles, arguing that the deadly disease is God's punishment for human sins. Even his own daughter, Erika, had to publicly contradict him. Actually, the *Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)* is playing along with RFK Jr.'s view by firing thousand of meteorologists, chemists,

toxicologists, biologists and other scientists who have been exposing the increasing pollution of the environment caused by, among other things, Trump's sellout to the oil industry.

Among other supporters of Trump are several Catholic pastors and bishops who have criticized Pope Francis' leadership and totally ignored Trump's unchristian, egomaniac, and immoral policies and actions. Prominent among them is Winona, Minnesota's Bishop Robert Baron. After attending Trump's *State of the Union* speech to Congress on March 4, the Bishop described the presentation as "a liturgy of democracy like the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass." Trump himself has put up

a front of support for Pope Francis as if both are pursuing the same goals. After he went to Rome to attend the burial of Pope Francis, the White House set up an image of Trump dressed as the Pope. In fact, it would be very difficult to find a sharper contrast of leadership than that of Pope Francis and Donald Trump.

Now, let us be clear: Catholics should participate in politics in line with true Christian duties and morality because they cannot, and should not, remain neutral when basic human rights and justice call for their voice and action. No true Christian can remain silent and place political partisanship ahead of his/her moral duty. The current "owners of power" believe and act as if God is on their side while they use their wealth and power to fulfill their goals. They keep on believing Trump's rhetoric, have sold out to the wealth and power of MAGA billionaires now led by the world's wealthiest man, namely the billionaire Elon Musk who has been wrecking America's traditional democratic system with the excuse of limiting government spending. Well, Trump has accomplished exactly what he claimed to be achieving, increasingly moving the nation to a Nazi-like dictatorship even more tightly tied to the capitalist system. In fact, the greatest irony is that the nation's economic crisis and recession would be quickly solved if the billionaires would pass some of their billions to the government and volunteer a raise on their paltry tax duties.



Cardinal Robert McElroy speaks at his installation Mass as the Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Washington here on March 11, 2025, at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception. He has been a leading voice in the U.S. church for immigrants and the environment and has argued for greater efforts to welcome LGBTQ+ Catholics.

Now, the first one hundred days of Trump's second presidency have been a litany of poor or unwise decisions and actions that threaten the foundations of the American Democratic Republic and are alarming not only Americans but also most Europeans, Asians, and Latin Americans, and especially caring Catholics. Some examples which have and continue to be highlighted by the media are:

- an immigration policy that abuses the protections of Social Security and often disregards the most basic human rights;
- wrecking of the resources of DEI (Diversity, Equity & Inclusion programs) and of USAID, which are centered on helping the poor across the world, including the most valuable aid provided by Catholic Charities;
- Invalidating climate research by firing thousands of biologists, chemists, meteorologists and other scientists with the totally unscientific argument that natural disasters are part of God's plan
- the denial of the most basic human rights for transgender folks and pregnant women
- the assault on the judicial process and on freedom of the press that centers on civil rights and the whole democratic process; and
- the attempt to deny the facts of American history and free research by cutting the funds of the Smithsonian Museum and of the African American Museum of History.

These are only a few examples of actions initiated by the man who claims to be the best American President ever and, who on April 21 boasted that "We are saving the American Dream." It is quite disturbing that so many millions of Americans continue to support a man who, during the first 100 days of his second turn in the White House continues his tsunami of lies or distortions of the truth and has ordered the execution of policies that contradict the core of Christianity.

Despite President Trump's constant rhetoric about being God's choice "to make the United States the greatest nation ever," it would be difficult to find a greater contrast than between his behavior and that of Pope Francis as head of the Catholic Church. Yes, Trump went to Rome for the Pontiff's burial, but actions are what defines the goodness and morality of a person. What makes a Christian is his/her following of the example of Jesus. Pope

Francis valued each human being, was personal in every way, loved touching people who came close, shook hands

and said to everyone: "God loves you!" He personally visited God's people in the most remote corners of Africa and Asia emphasizing that loving and worshipping Jesus means adopting a "preferential option for the poor," which became central to the Church since the Vatican II Council (1962). Pope Francis, in his encyclical *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (11/24,13) already pointed out what has been dominating Trump's administration in 2025:



President Trump and his wife, Melania at Pope Francis' Funeral.
bit.ly/trump-pope-funeral

"The worship of the ancient golden calf has returned in a new and ruthless guise in the idolatry of money and dictatorship of an impersonal economy lacking a truly human purpose: not to share the wealth with the poor is to steal from them and take away their livelihood. It is not our own goods which we hold, it is theirs."

Fortunately, there is now increasing evidence that "Trumpism" will not last because millions of Americans are becoming aware and are protesting its anti-people agenda and the immorality of many of its policies. There are also signs that an increasing number of US bishops are more actively supporting the kind of Christianity that was exemplified by Pope Francis during his 12 years as head of the Catholic Church. The US Bishops Conference has been criticizing the government's deportation maneuvers while bishops such as former San Diego's Archbishop Rober McElroy, now Cardinal of Washington, D. C., has been a strong defender of the poor and of all human life. The presence of McElroy in the nation's capital occupying the top position of the American Catholic hierarchy, certainly creates a lot of uneasiness for President Trump.

Finally, the urgent need to act by Democratic Party officials (especially of those who call themselves Catholic) seems to be taking place. Delaware's Senator Chris Coons spelled out his commitment with these words: "Scripture has more than 2,000 concrete references that make clear righteousness is rooted in service to the poor, no matter where they may be" (cf. Schlumpf, *NCR*, April 25-May 8, p. 9). It is urgent that Christian voters, especially those who cast their ballot for Trump, interpret the meaning of the Bible on whole life and example of Jesus and continue to act.

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