

Religious Freedom Is on the Ballot

Religious freedom is of paramount concern to Catholics and all people of goodwill.

The eight-year Obama-Biden administration produced more friction between the Catholic Church and the federal government than any other administration in our lifetime. A particular source of this friction was the Health and Human Services' contraception, sterilization and abortion-inducing drug mandate, which sought to force even Catholic groups — like EWTN and the Little Sisters of the Poor — to become complicit in providing coverage to their employees for these services.

For the last four years, there has been a rollback of the Obama-Biden policies that attempted to force believing Catholics — even nuns — to violate their faith.

Now, as the country stands at a crossroads and prepares to choose its president, it is entirely possible that we could return to the contentious years of 2008-2016.

Of course, some are trying very hard to convince us that there will be no such attacks on the beliefs of Catholics.

Patrick Carolan — whose group Vote Common Good is campaigning for former Vice President Joe Biden — recently told one of our EWTN News outlets that religious-freedom threats in this country are nonexistent. He said: “We need to stop spreading the myth that our religious freedom is being violated,” adding that there is no “war against Catholicism.”

However, the facts tell a different — much more disturbing — story.

During the first presidential debate, Biden referred to himself as an “Irish Catholic.” He also said: “The party is me. Right now, I am the Democratic Party.”

But if Biden is “the Democratic Party,” as he stated, then he fully owns the [party's platform](#), which includes overt support for unrestricted abortion, funding for Planned Parenthood, the repeal of the Mexico City Policy and the Hyde Amendment, the passing of the “Equality Act” and the elimination of religious exemptions that protect employers, medical professionals and others from being forced to violate their deeply held religious principles.

Does Biden's embrace of these positions and his embrace by the most secular elements of society bode well for Catholics?

In a word, No — not if you plan to practice your faith and not just claim it. If your claim of Catholicism is just the result of your baptism, that is one thing; but if your Catholicism means you are committed to Church teaching, that is something else.

We have seen this with the attacks on the faith of Amy Coney Barrett at her judicial confirmation hearings three years ago — and again today — because, in the words of Sen. Dianne Feinstein of California: “The dogma lives loudly in you, and that's of concern.” We have also seen it in the attacks on judicial nominee Brian Buescher's faith by Biden's running mate, Kamala Harris, two years ago.

And we have seen it in Biden's own words. As we [reported](#): “Shortly after the Supreme Court ruled in favor of the Little Sisters of the Poor in *Little Sisters of the Poor v. Pennsylvania* on July 8, Biden said he was ‘disappointed’ by the decision and promised to reinstate Obama-era policies requiring the sisters to ensure access to birth control in violation of their religious beliefs.”

And yet defenders of those attacking Barrett and other Catholic nominees often brush off charges of anti-Catholicism by noting that Amy Coney Barrett critics are also Joe Biden supporters.

Biden is then used as a shield to allow hostility to Catholic beliefs on the basis that he is Catholic. And from his own comments, it would appear that he is not just being used as a shield to undermine the free exercise of religion by Catholics who find the beliefs of our faith compelling and enriching. One could even argue that perhaps he is being used as a Trojan horse through which policies that target Catholic belief can be implemented more easily since they will be proposed and enforced “by a Catholic.”

The new anti-Catholic prejudice has camouflaged itself precisely by exploiting existing divisions within the Church. Not every Catholic is targeted — in fact, some are embraced. Just those who authentically practice their faith are a problem.

The new anti-Catholic prejudice targets not baptism, but belief.

If you were baptized and identify yourself as a Catholic, that can still be acceptable as long as you don't publicly affirm or live out the Church's teachings — or your baptismal promises.

Archbishop Charles Chaput recently described this transformation of anti-Catholic bigotry in detail in [*First Things*](#). He wrote that in the eyes of today's Democratic Party, identifying as a Catholic or even donning the trappings of the faith are not a source of objection, but “if you're the kind of Catholic who seeks to discipline his or her life around Catholic beliefs regarding marriage and family, religious freedom, sex, and abortion — well, that's a different matter.”

Archbishop Chaput pointed to the party's rejection of pro-life Democratic Rep. Dan Lipinski of Illinois earlier this year as additional evidence of the party rejecting Catholics for practicing their faith.

Despite such political pressure and inducements, we must remember Christ's words: “What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his soul?” (Mark 8:36).

We should remember something else, too. The embrace of Catholic teaching is enriching to us and to all of society, and in this country, our God-given right to practice our faith is enshrined in the First Amendment — as the first right in our country's Bill of Rights.

There should be no obstacles to faithfully living out our Catholic faith in the public square.

Yet the threats to our religious freedom are very real. These are rights that are worth defending, and one powerful means to defend them is at the ballot box.

As we exercise our responsibility to vote, we need to realize that our very ability to live out the faith we profess is at stake.

As Catholics who faithfully embrace Church teaching, we need to be concerned about these new types of threats to our religious freedom that come from those who claim they are Catholic and those who seek to exploit that for their own political gain.

God bless you.

Michael Warsaw is the Chairman of the Board and Chief Executive Officer of the EWTN Global Catholic Network, and the Publisher of the National Catholic Register.