

TRUMP AND BIDEN COURTED CATHOLICS

The Catholic vote is the religious swing vote, which is why the Trump and Biden camps pursued it. This explained their outreach via Catholics for Trump and Catholics for Biden.

More important than these campaign efforts was how the two candidates approached issues that are central to Catholicism. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops previously declared abortion to be the “preeminent” issue for Catholics. On this score, Trump’s pro-life position was consistent with the teachings of the Catholic Church.

Biden, who was once pro-life, turned out to be a champion of abortion-on-demand through term; he was therefore wildly out-of-step with his religion’s position.

Trump and the Catholic Church were in agreement that marriage should be the preserve of one man and one woman. Biden rejects the Church’s teaching and is a devotee of gay marriage. School choice is favored by the Catholic Church, and Trump is a rabid supporter of it. Biden is opposed to all school choice initiatives.

Religious liberty has emerged as one of the most important issues of our day, affecting domestic and foreign policy alike. We tallied nearly 50 instances where Trump embraced or advanced religious liberty in the past three-and-a-half years.

We examined Biden’s record over 47 years of public service and could find almost no instances of his support for religious liberty. He did vote for the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) in 1993, but his recent endorsement of the “Equality Act” and “Do No Harm” effectively vitiates his position: both would seriously undercut, if not neuter altogether, RFRA. Most glaringly, Biden’s support for the Health and Human Services

mandate that would force the Little Sisters of the Poor to pay for abortion-inducing drugs in their healthcare plan has led him to be denounced by Catholic leaders, lay and clergy alike.

The official Party Platforms offer a revealing look at the way the Trump and Biden campaigns address religious liberty. There are nine references to religious liberty in the Republican Party Platform, all of which are positive statements. The Democratic Party Platform cites religious liberty six times, four times positively and two times negatively.

Both Trump and Biden have been praised and criticized by some bishops. This matters less to Trump as he is not Catholic. But it matters greatly to Biden.

Cardinal Raymond Burke has said that Biden should not be given Holy Communion because of his pro-abortion record. Some priests have, in fact, denied him the Eucharist, or have warned him not to come to Communion, because of his stance.

Bishop Richard Stika called out Biden over the summer. "Don't understand how Mr. Biden can claim to be a good and faithful Catholic as he denies so much of Church teaching especially on the absolute child abuse and human rights violations of the most innocent, the not yet born." Bishop Thomas Tobin took an oblique shot at Biden when he observed that there was no Catholic on the Democratic ticket this time.

Some bishops have made more veiled-like comments. Bishop Joseph Strickland has spoken out strongly about the election and how the "Sanctity of Life, true marriage between a man & a woman, supporting the nuclear family and sexual morality based on biblical truth" must be paramount. Bishop Thomas Daly has advised those who "obstinately persevere in their public support for abortion, should not receive Communion without first being reconciled to Christ and the Church."

What got Biden into deep trouble with the bishops was his decision not only to support gay marriage, but his willingness

to officiate at a wedding between two men. Three leaders of the bishops' conference, Archbishop Joseph Kurtz, Bishop Richard Malone, and Archbishop Thomas Wenski issued a statement that was obviously aimed at Biden. They criticized him for being "a counter witness, instead of a faithful one founded in the truth."

The most recent bishop to call into question Biden's standing in the Catholic Church—without mentioning him specifically—is Archbishop Samuel Aquila. "It is not possible to be a Catholic in good standing and support abortion or assisted suicide, to promote unnatural sexuality, or to seek to push people of faith out of the public square."

Finally, there is the issue of anti-Catholicism. The Trump administration has never been tagged with anti-Catholicism, but the Biden campaign certainly has. In fact, his running mate, Kamala Harris, made a stunning contribution to this ancient strain of bigotry when she badgered a man being considered for a seat on a federal district court in Nebraska simply because he belonged to the Knights of Columbus.

Then we had Humanists for Biden, an off-shoot of Secular Democrats of America, also of recent vintage. The parent group was off to a fast start bashing Catholics. Biden also had in his employ Nikitha Rai, a data expert who believes that Catholics like Amy Coney Barrett, who espouse traditional moral values, should not be allowed to serve on the Supreme Court.

It is evident that Biden's policies on key issues are problematic from a Catholic perspective. Add to this his strained relationship with many priests and bishops, as well as the support he receives from anti-Catholics, and the difference between Trump and him is considerable.