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U.S. President Joe Biden addresses the nation from the Oval Office of the White House, July 24 in Washington, about his decision to drop his Democratic presidential reelection bid. (OSV News/Reuters/Evan Vucci)



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Ok, I'll admit it. I'm pretty much a political junkie. It's probably because I grew up in the '60s amid civil rights marches, political assassinations and the peace movement. I quickly learned that big, positive, changes in my country only come after months or years of planning, educating and organizing.

I developed a lifelong habit of assiduously reading news, including our online Cleveland Plain Dealer, The New York Times and various online blogs most days of the week. NPR and the "PBS NewsHour" are daily staples. Without good information, how can anyone make wise choices about our political leaders or local and national issues? How else to discover who fights for issues important to ordinary people or who fights against corrupt politicians and complicit organizations, such as Ohio FirstEnergy's bribery scandal?

For much of my life I naively assumed that most people would also want to discover the truth of things before making political choices.

Boy, was I wrong.

Ever since Donald Trump arrived on the scene it has become painfully obvious that his MAGA supporters will follow him blindly no matter how many lies he tells. After Trump's Aug. 8 press conference, a team of NPR reporters and editors found 162 lies and distortions during his 64-minute event.

Most politicians will exaggerate, and it often happens that politicians make mistakes when speaking extemporaneously. But nothing matches Trump's blatant disregard for the truth — especially when the truth might threaten his access to power.

Donald Trump's inability to see the truth, even when it is right in front of him, was thrown into sharp relief after President Joe Biden's July 21 decision to withdraw from the presidential campaign and endorse Vice President Kamala Harris for the nomination.

Trump was completely thrown off his moorings.

For the next month, rather than address pressing campaign issues, he appeared obsessed with Joe Biden's departure. In an Aug. 6 post on Truth Social he accused Democratic leaders of stealing the nomination from Biden. In what can only be described as delusional messaging, he suggested that President Biden would "crash" the democratic convention and try "to take back the Nomination ..." [because] "He feels that he made a historically tragic mistake by handing over the U.S. Presidency, a COUP, to the people in the World he most hates, and he wants it back, NOW!!!"



Republican presidential nominee and former U.S. President Donald Trump gestures during a campaign rally, at the North Carolina Aviation Museum & Hall of Fame Aug. 21 in Asheboro. (OSV News/Reuters/Jonathan Drake)

Although advisers have tried to convince the former president to focus on issues, at a recent rally in York, Pennsylvania, he again told supporters that the Democrats had overthrown Biden as part of a "coup."

The man just can't conceive of a universe in which anyone would willingly hand over power on behalf of the common good.

Yet that is exactly what President Joseph R. Biden did. On Wednesday, July 24, he told the nation, "I revere this office, but I love my country more."

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As Biden and many others see it, Trump's record of flouting the law and inciting a violent insurrection constitute a clear threat to democracy. There is good reason to believe that our U.S. democracy will be seriously threatened if Donald Trump succeeds in getting elected.

Biden listened to respected leaders in the Democratic Party who raised concerns about his electability. His entire career had been built on the unifying belief that "There is nothing America can't do—when we do it together." Yet if he stayed in the race, he risked tearing his party apart. In the end, he chose to remain true to his political identity.

"Nothing, nothing can come in the way of saving our democracy," Biden said on July 24. "That includes personal ambition. So I've decided the best way forward is to pass the torch to a new generation. It's the best way to unite our nation."



"Lazarus at the Rich Man's Gate," from "The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus," a 1554 engraving by Heinrich Aldegrever (Metropolitan Museum of Art)

Biden's political vision is so far beyond anything Trump could imagine that he needed to deny the real, grace-filled reasons the president stepped down. He stepped down for the common good. He passed the torch on behalf of unifying people rather than pitting them against one another.

For Trump — whether in business or in politics — there is only one way to operate. One must always dominate and overpower one's opponent. He cannot conceive of ever willingly sharing power. So for him, the only way Joe Biden would ever have relinquished power was to have it wrested away by those who were more powerful.

How sad.

Last week's Democratic convention bears its own bright witness that Biden's selfless act released an enormous amount of positive energy on behalf of the political issues

benefiting the middle class and the poor to which he has given his life.

Power is a gift to be shared. When used wisely, it will multiply. When hoarded, it seems to shrink in upon itself, narrowing the vision of the one obsessed with it.



"The Rich Man in Hell, Seeing Lazarus Embraced by Abraham," from "The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus" a 1554 engraving by Heinrich Aldegrever (Metropolitan Museum of Art)

This puts me in mind of the story of Dives and Lazarus in the New Testament (Luke 16:19-31). The rich man, Dives, paid no attention to the needs of the poor, hungry Lazarus who spent a miserable lifetime on his very doorstep.

When both men die, Lazarus finds comfort in the bosom of Abraham, while Dives suffers torment. He begs Abraham to send Lazarus with water to cool his tongue. But Abraham cannot grant Dives' request because "between us and you a great chasm is established to prevent anyone from crossing" (Luke 16:26).

I always wondered about that chasm. Now, I think it is one we create for ourselves.

This Scripture story seems a fitting metaphor for the present moment. Will we say yes to a shrunken worldview, or will we share and use our power on behalf of the common good?

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