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Republican presidential nominee former President Donald Trump speaks at an election night watch party Nov. 6 in West Palm Beach, Fla. (AP/Alex Brandon)

by NCR Staff

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With a mix of emotions that fell along ideological lines, Catholics awoke to the early morning news Nov. 6 that Donald Trump had secured a second term in the White House.

Trump's supporters touted his victory over Vice President Kamala Harris as a triumph for a nation worried about the economy and moving to the right, while opponents expressed fears his return to the White House opens a dark and uncertain period for American democracy.

Archbishop Timothy Broglio, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and head of the Archdiocese for the Military Services, USA, congratulated Trump for his win and stressed that now the task is to "move from campaigning to governing" and to "transition peacefully from one government to the next."

Broglio said the Catholic Church is "not aligned with any political party, and neither is the bishops' conference. No matter who occupies the White House or holds the majority on Capitol Hill, the Church's teachings remain unchanged, and we bishops look forward to working with the people's elected representatives to advance the common good of all."

He also said Christians and Americans "have the duty to treat each other with charity, respect, and civility, even if we may disagree on how to carry out matters of public policy." He asked for Mary's intercession to guide leaders to "uphold the common good of all and promote the dignity of the human person, especially the most vulnerable among us, including the unborn, the poor, the stranger, the elderly and infirm, and migrants."

The Adorers of the Blood of Christ urged their followers on social media, however they feel about the election results, to ask themselves who it is God is calling us to be.

"On this morning after the election, our country is still divided. Some people feel like they won while others feel they have lost," they wrote. "So today, is there one action I can do that helps me be a reconciling, compassionate presence by being generous, creative and kind?"

Trump's course to victory came on campaign pledges that in some ways stood in stark contrast to Catholic teaching: deportation of millions of people from the country, environmental regulation rollbacks, repealing the Affordable Care Act, opposing unions, and an overture to nativism.

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It also came in spite of his role in the Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection at the U.S. Capitol, insistent false claims that the 2020 election was rigged, a jury verdict of sexual abuse, 34 felony convictions and three pending criminal cases whose future is now in question.

To these pledges and in the face of these controversies, nearly 72 million American voters lent their support. As of midday Nov. 6, Trump had garnered 292 electoral votes — winning all five of the swing states that have been called — to Harris' 224 electoral votes.

"We failed to keep the Republic," Steve Millies, a professor of public theology at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, wrote on the social media platform X. "No matter what else the analysis tells us, voters preferred a convicted felon still awaiting trial for other crimes who gave us pandemic, Jan 6, [Madison Square Garden], no coherent policy vision & no record of accomplishments."

Policies that Trump outlined on the campaign trail drew worry from some Catholics fearful of how they may be realized.

Trump's pledge to conduct the largest mass deportation in the nation's history has been described as a nightmare scenario by Catholic immigration advocates. Retired Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio of Brooklyn, New York, said it would be "a horrible situation."

Dylan Corbett, executive director of the Hope Border Institute in El Paso, Texas, said Trump has "a track record of doing real damage" on immigration and there should be real concerns that a second term will be more experienced.

"They're going to present a significant amount of danger because it's not just rhetoric, it's not just campaign promises," he said.

Anna Gallagher, executive director Catholic Legal Immigration Network, known as CLINIC, said that the results of the presidential election may "present renewed challenges for those we serve" but that CLINIC remains "committed to advocating for just and humane immigration policies — and will do so regardless of who occupies the White House."

In a statement, Jesuit Relief Services urged the incoming Trump administration "to honor the United States' historic role as a proud nation of immigrants" and reject anti-immigration stances, nativism and racism.

"How we respond to the tens of millions of people forced to flee their homes is a serious moral, legal, diplomatic, and economic question that impacts all of us," it said.



Donald Trump, then a candidate during the Republican presidential primary, talks with Texas Gov. Greg Abbott during a visit to the U.S.-Mexico border Feb. 29 in Eagle Pass, Texas. (AP/Eric Gay)

While Trump's win raises concern for treatment of immigrants, Millies called it a "big win for the billionaire oligarchs," like Elon Musk, who backed and bankrolled Trump's campaign.

"It was never fascism really," Millies said, referring to descriptions of Trump by his former chief of staff John Kelly and others. "Oligarchy is the great danger of the 21st

century. It is here."

Kevin Roberts, a Wyoming Catholic and the head of the conservative think tank Heritage Foundation, which authored the controversial Project 2025 blueprint for a second Trump administration, congratulated the president-elect on his victory.

"[Trump] triumphed over a relentless left-wing machine intent on stopping him — and the will of the American people — at any cost," Roberts said in a news release. "This is a victory for every American, and a testament to their indomitable spirit."

On the social media platform X, the group Catholic Democrats asked people to join them in praying for the nation, Americans who are feeling anxiety and disappointment with the outcome, and the candidates, Harris and Trump.

"He sorely needed our prayers before tonight. He will need them even more now," the group wrote about Trump.

Washington Cardinal Wilton Gregory, the nation's first African American cardinal, urged the country to "remember that, as people of faith and goodwill, we are called to work together to seek truth, justice, and peace in our homes, in our communities, and in our nation."

He also noted, "Some people today are breathing a sigh of relief at the outcome of our national, state and local elections, even as others are experiencing anxiety about our future. Our path forward lies in our respect for one another and in the God-given dignity we share, offered freely with prayer, patience, kindness, and hope."



An attendee holds a U.S. flag at the conclusion of an Election Night rally for Democratic presidential nominee U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris at Howard University in Washington Nov. 6. Harris' Republican rival, Donald Trump, was elected the 47th president of the United States. (OSV News/Reuters/Daniel Cole)

The nonprofit group Faith in Public Life called on faith leaders to be courageous "and resist those who seize power for personal gain," in a statement from CEO Jeanné Lewis, who is Catholic.

She warned of the dangers of a Trump presidency, saying Project 2025 "poses a grave threat to the hard-won rights and protections of the most vulnerable among us — people living in poverty, racial and ethnic minorities, LGBTQIA+ people, religious minorities, and others who have historically faced systemic discrimination and oppression."

Lewis called upon all people of faith to "use our collective moral power to resist violence and to pursue nonviolent action to build a future of freedom and dignity for all."

Trump's election will have serious reverberations on national and global efforts to rein in climate change. He has dismissed the scientific consensus of human-driven climate change as a "hoax" and repeated the refrain of "drill, baby, drill" on the campaign trail. He has also pledged to remove the U.S. from the Paris Agreement on climate change a second time, and hinted at even exiting the U.N. treaty underlying it.

The reelection of Trump comes just days before countries, including the U.S., gather in Baku, Azerbaijan, for the latest United Nations climate summit.

"The U.S. election outcome is very unfortunate for the world and the planet," Lydia Lehlogonolo Machaka, energy and extractivism officer with the international Catholic development network CIDSE, said in an email.



Supporters watch returns at a campaign election night watch party for Republican presidential nominee former President Donald Trump at the Palm Beach Convention Center Nov. 6 in West Palm Beach, Fla. (AP/Evan Vucci)

Trump's second term will coincide with much of what remains in this decade, a period during which climate scientists have said global greenhouse gas emissions must be nearly halved in order to keep the Paris Agreement goal of limiting temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius within reach.

The world's largest source and user of oil and gas, the U.S. is also the largest historical source of greenhouse gas emissions and second only to China in the present day. During his speech, Trump lauded that the U.S. has "more liquid gold than any country in the world."

A joint statement from Catholic Climate Covenant and the Laudato Si' Movement said, "We know there will be challenges ahead." They noted "significant steps backward on climate action" during Trump's first term.

"We call upon and seek to work with President Trump's administration and Congress to help ensure that the momentum generated on climate policies in the past four years continues, so that current and future generations inherit a safer planet," the statement said.

As part of his closing argument before Election Day, Trump berated trans rights, saying at his Madison Square Garden rally in New York that he would get "transgender insanity the hell out of our schools, and we will keep men out of women's sports."

Backed by Republican lawmakers, legislation banning gender-affirming for minors has passed in 26 states, according to the Human Rights Campaign.



Supporters of Democratic presidential nominee U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris react to early election results during an Election Night rally at Howard University in Washington Nov. 5, 2024. Harris' Republican rival, Donald Trump, was elected the 47th president of the United States. (OSV News/Reuters/Kevin Lamarque)

Stanley Francis "JR" Zerkowski, executive director of Fortunate Families, a Catholic group that supports LGBTQ+ individuals and their families, on Facebook called it "staggering" the number of trans, nonbinary and queer people of all ages "who have reached out to me because they are scared and anxious, depressed and suicidal."

For LGBTQ folks, and trans people in particular, another Trump presidency "is a threat not only to vital health services but also to personal safety," Maxwell Kuzma, a transgender man in Ohio, told NCR.

"Trump has spread lies about trans youth and encouraged violence against those he views as enemies. In this political landscape, trans youth especially are terrified of becoming victims of hate crimes," said Kuzma. "I am deeply worried for the next generation of trans people."

Trump is set to become the second president to serve two non-consecutive terms and at 78 he is the oldest ever elected. He is also the first felon elected to the White House and the first president to reenter the Oval Office after being twice impeached.

Early exit poll data from The Washington Post indicated that Catholics made up 22% of all voters. Fifty-six percent of them voted for Trump, compared to 41% for Harris.

Polling by the National Catholic Reporter in October of Catholics in the battleground states hinted at such an outcome. In that poll, 1,172 Catholics in seven swing states favored Trump over Harris 50% to 45%.

The Associated Press called the race for Trump at 5:35 a.m. EST.

As of midday Wednesday, Trump was on track to win the popular vote, a first for a Republican candidate since 2004. Republicans also reclaimed the Senate, while control of the House of Representatives remained undecided.

In a victory speech hours earlier at a convention center in Palm Beach, Florida, Trump called his campaign "the greatest political movement of all time. There's never been anything like this in this country."

"America has given us an unprecedented and powerful mandate," he said.



Supporters of Republican President-elect Donald Trump gathered at a Maricopa County Republican Committee election watch party in Arizona react Nov. 6 as Trump speaks from the Palm Beach County Convention Center in Florida after being elected the 47th president of the United States Nov. 5. (OSV News/Reuters/Go Nakamura)

Late in the speech, Trump referenced the July assassination attempt on him, saying, "Many people have told me that God spared my life for a reason.

"And that reason was to save our country and to restore America to greatness. And now we are going to fulfill that mission together," he said.

Trump's election for a second term marks the end of one of the country's most calamitous and consequential campaigns.

The assassination attempt on Trump, July 13 in Pennsylvania, came eight days before President Joe Biden, the nation's second Catholic president, ended his own bid for reelection. That move came following weeks of uproar from fellow Democrats after a dreadful debate performance that left once-supporters questioning his age,

aptitude and ability to win.

What followed from there was a rapid nomination by Democrats of Harris as the party's new candidate, leaving her with little more than 100 days to make her case to the American people.

Denise Murphy McGraw, national chair of the group Catholics Vote Common Good, a multi-issue Catholic voter group, thanked Harris and her running mate, Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz, for "running a positive and inclusive campaign that was willing to bring together and listen to all voices, including those of faith voters."

This story was written by Brian Roewe with contributions from Rhina Guidos, Heidi Sclumpf, Dan Stockman, Katie Collins Scott, Stephanie Yeagle and Carol Zimmermann.

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