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Social Justice



Republican President-elect Donald Trump gestures while addressing supporters during his rally at the Palm Beach County Convention Center Nov. 6 in West Palm Beach, Florida, after being elected the 47th president of the United States. (OSV News/Reuters/Carlos Barria)



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Sisters across the United States expressed their dismay that former President Donald Trump will return to the White House — and shared their determination to serve the vulnerable, while fostering hope and unity among Americans.

They also called each other and the nation to focus on what really matters and to meet the needs of those around us.

The morning of Nov. 6, hours after President-elect Trump was declared the victor, Sr. Barbara McIntyre, the general custodian of the Missionary Servants of the Most Blessed Trinity, sent a letter to all their sisters saying that while policies and politics are important, they are not at the center of sisters' lives and their actions must set them apart.

"We have experienced a tumultuous election season, which seems to have gone on for years. Some may be happy with the outcomes and some not so much. The hype of both sides has made it seem that the candidate of the other side is the devil incarnate," McIntyre wrote.

"I cannot say that it does not matter. The policies and plans of those in power [do] have an impact. However, we know the One who has the most important impact on us. We know that the center of our life is the Blessed and Holy Trinity."



A supporter of Democratic presidential nominee U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris reacts to early election results at an Election Night rally at Howard University in Washington on Nov. 6. (OSV News/Reuters/Daniel Cole)

Sr. Jean Anne Zappa, president of the Ursuline Sisters of Louisville, Kentucky, offered similar thoughts.

"Because of our Catholic faith, we live with hope. There is a reason that hope rests between the words, 'faith' and 'love.' Hope connects us to our beliefs and moral center, and love is the way we are called to live as Christians," Zappa wrote in a reflection.

The faithful must remain hopeful for leaders who work for the benefit of all, she said.

"Now, more than ever, we need leaders in our country who have hope and a vision for the future. We need leaders of high moral character who work for the common good," Zappa wrote.

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But, she said, we cannot just be hopeful that others will do what is right. We must be an example.

"We have much to be hopeful for in our country, but we also have much work to do. We remain a country that continues to grapple with the sins of racism, misogyny, and violence," she wrote. "We continue to pray for our elected officials, that they may govern with wisdom, prudence, and hope."

Similarly, Sr. Mary Imler, general community minister of the Franciscan Sisters of the Sacred Heart, encouraged people to remember the words of Pope Francis in his recent encyclical, *Dilexit Nos*: "We are called to build a new civilization of love. … [T]he heart of Christ desires that we cooperate with Him in restoring goodness and beauty to our world."

The leadership team of the Grand Rapids Dominicans in Michigan noted there is a time to mourn — but that mourning can put us in solidarity with those we are called to serve.



Donilee McGinnis, 42, regional organizing director for North Fulton for the Harris-Walz campaign, center, reacts at Manuel's Tavern in Atlanta while watching Democratic presidential nominee U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris deliver her concession speech at Howard University in Washington, on Nov. 6. (OSV News/Reuters/Cheney Orr)

"Some of us are okay and maybe even rejoicing with the election results; but many, *many* of us are hurting, scared, angry, dismayed, mystified, and rightly concerned for the futures of women and girls, of our nation, of our neighbors near and far, and of the planet," their statement said.

"In many ways, there are no words to express the pain of this moment. We must grieve, we must wail, we must cry and cry out, we must lament that which is before us — a return to the old, to isolationism, to fearmongering and division."

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> —Dominican Sisters of Grand Rapids

They noted that in his keynote address at the 2024 assembly for the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, Fr. Bryan Massingale told attendees that we "must be a solidarity in grief, in loss, in lament as we live in this age of exponential change. …" That solidarity will lead us to meet the needs of the time, they wrote.

"It is only then that we will be able to continue to embrace the work to which we are all called — the mission of Jesus — and to respond to the needs of those who are poor, alone, outcast, refugees, infirm, or imprisoned," the statement said.

Many others acknowledged the grief many are feeling and pointed out that mourning can be holy. The Leadership Collaborative, for example, said it wants to create community around the anxiety and mourning many are experiencing.

"We are gravely concerned about the rigidity of power that is grasping for control," their officials wrote. "This moment affirms the dire need for our continued work at

decolonizing our ideologies. In our collective struggles, we also hold a deep faith that through commitment to community, friendship, love, and faith, all shall be well."

Related: Following Trump's victory, sisters express worry about future of 'common good'

Sr. Sharon Pollnow, general superior of the Sisters of St. Agnes, wrote to her sisters the morning after the election that emotions are natural and take time to resolve, but they do not change God's call.

"Together we will discover ways to adjust to life moving forward," Pollnow wrote. "Who then shall we be? Our country, our world, our Earth still needs us. We need one another. I am confident that we will continue sharing and raising up the Gospel values to which we are committed."

The Sisters of Mercy of the Americas said the answer to grief is prayer.

"There is room for disagreement and debate," the sisters said in their statement, but added that they "hope and pray President-elect Donald Trump will choose the path of unity and denounce violence."

"We encourage him to be open to views from all sides and work together for the good of the country, including working to end the epidemic of gun violence, to swiftly find a just path to peace in war-torn areas of the world, and find a humane approach to immigration."

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> —The Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, referring to President-elect Donald Trump
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The staff of WATER, a nonprofit educational center that focuses on feminist work in religion, issued a statement that said while there is certainly reason to fear, there is also great hope.

"The Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics, and Ritual joins a worried world in contemplating the global impact of the U.S. presidential election. Those who are poor and marginalized, women, people of color, LGBTQIA+ people, immigrants, and Earth itself have every reason to tremble," they wrote. But "we seek to live not in fear, but in committed hope. …We join our energies in collaborative efforts to make love, equity, inclusion, and non-violence the hallmarks of a wonderful world."

The Congregation of Divine Providence in San Antonio, Texas, reminds us to have faith in our loving God.

"As we journey together through this transition of national leadership, the Congregation remains anchored in our trust in Divine Providence," they wrote. "We are committed to living our mission of being the loving face of our Provident God. … We seek to be a healing presence, actively engaging in the work of supporting life-giving communities."

Many others pointed to the fact that the type of work that will be required is already central to religious life.

Sr. Mary Susan Remsgar, prioress of the Benedictine Sisters of Chicago, noted that the same freedoms that let us choose our leaders also allow us to live out our faith — and that doing so is even more important.

"Given we live in a democratic nation that affords us the freedom and right to vote our conscience, may we also exercise that same freedom to speak up and act out of our conscience, to uphold and ensure the dignity of each and every person," Remsgar said. "Otherwise, we may risk losing not only our democracy but our very selves."

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Officials at Network Catholic social justice lobby, said that since America's founding, we have been working to live up to our principles and the election results only make the need for that work to continue more obvious.

"We will continue the mission to promote policies that affirm the dignity of all people with the knowledge that every person — regardless of ZIP code, race, creed, economic status, gender, or sexual orientation — has inherent dignity and deserves to share in the freedoms promised in the organizing documents of this country," they said in a statement.



Participants gather at the Nuns on the Bus & Friends rally in Brentwood, New York, on Oct. 2. The event was part of the 2024 "Vote Our Future" national bus tour sponsored by Network, a Catholic social justice advocacy nonprofit. The tour began Sept. 30 in Philadelphia and concluded Oct. 18 in San Francisco. (OSV News/Gregory A. Shemitz)

Network officials said America can be a nation that works for all people, not just a fortunate few.

"The threats that lie ahead for us, especially the most marginalized communities, as the Trump administration seeks to enact its policy agenda are quite clear," the statement said, calling on the president-elect to reconsider his promise of mass deportations, tax cuts for the wealthy, and other policies against Catholic social tradition.

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> —Network Lobby for Catholic Social Justice

The leadership team of the Dominican Sisters of Sparkill, New York, said they are still discerning how they will respond to the injustices they fear will come, but those responses will be grounded in their faith.

"Faithful to our Dominican charism, we … remain committed to the pursuit of truth in order to face and address the injustice of racism, war, exploitation of women and children, exclusion of migrants, and all other threats to peace," they wrote, citing their congregational direction statement. "In light of our commitment, we ponder how we will respond to the stated policies and plans of the newly elected national leadership."



Sr. Carol Selak, of the Sisters of the Holy Name of Jesus and Mary, and Sr. Beatriz Tavera, of the Sisters of Social Service, speak with a teenager after she received a blessing Feb. 8 at the Cobina Posada del Migrante Shelter in Mexicali, Mexico. (GSR photo/Rhina Guidos)

Meanwhile, the Sisters of St. Joseph of Philadelphia issued a statement saying that whatever happens, whatever the divisions, whatever the challenges, the answer is love.

"As we ponder yesterday's election, we are grateful to live in a country where, at our best, we value democracy and strive for the common good of all people," they wrote. "We are also aware that our beloved nation is experiencing divisions of many kinds. This reality compels us to live our mission of unioning love ever more deeply."

In fact, the statement says, love is needed more than ever.

"We acknowledge our concern for persons living on the margins and renew our commitment to stand with them," they wrote. "In these coming weeks and months, may we, in the spirit of our foundresses, circle our nation with love. Together, let us be a healing presence for every kind of dear neighbor without distinction."