Voices of Sisters
Social Justice

The United States Capitol building in Washington, D.C. (Unsplash/Andy Feliciotti)

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Many of those responsible for implementing and carrying out the current administration's policies publicly identify themselves as Catholic.

When faith is invoked in public life, it raises an important question: How do these policies reflect the principles of Catholic social teaching?

For Catholics, faith is not simply a personal identity or cultural label. It carries with it a moral framework that has developed over centuries. Catholic social teaching calls us to uphold the dignity of every human person, care for the poor and vulnerable, welcome the stranger, and work for the common good. These principles are not optional additions to the faith; they are central to the church's understanding of justice and human flourishing.

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Throughout history, Catholics in public life have drawn on these teachings to shape their work in government, education, healthcare and social services. Religious communities, lay leaders and Catholic institutions have founded hospitals, schools and charitable organizations precisely because they believed the Gospel demanded concrete action on behalf of those most in need.

In the political arena today, Catholics across the spectrum often speak about the role their faith plays in shaping their public service. Recently, Catholic Democrats in Congress issued a statement affirming that their work in public office is guided by a living Catholic tradition that recognizes the dignity of every human life and calls leaders to protect society's most vulnerable members. Their statement pointed to longstanding Catholic principles such as solidarity, care for the poor, the dignity of work, and the moral responsibility to welcome migrants seeking safety and opportunity for their families.

At the same time, recent reporting has noted that Catholic lawmakers' voting records frequently align more closely with party platforms than with the broader range of issues addressed by Catholic social teaching. That observation should invite reflection across the political spectrum. When politicians publicly invoke their Catholic identity, it is reasonable for fellow Catholics — and for the broader public — to ask how that identity informs the policies they support.

Catholic social teaching does not belong to any political party. It challenges both the right and the left. It defends the dignity of unborn life while also insisting on the rights of migrants and refugees. It calls for economic systems that respect workers and lift up the poor while reminding society of the importance of family, community and moral responsibility. In other words, it asks more of our politics than simple partisan alignment.

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For that reason, we welcome the opportunity to hear an official statement from Catholic Republicans as well, reflecting on how current policies are understood in light of the church's social tradition. Such a statement could help clarify how Catholic lawmakers understand their responsibility to uphold human dignity, pursue the common good, and protect those most vulnerable in our society.

This kind of reflection would benefit not only Catholics but the broader public. When leaders draw upon religious identity in public life, it invites an honest conversation about how moral convictions shape political decisions. That conversation can deepen democratic life by reminding us that public leadership should ultimately be measured by how faithfully it serves the dignity of every person and the common good.

These conversations are not about scoring political points. They are about something deeper: the integrity of faith in public life. If Catholic identity is invoked in the public square, it should also be accompanied by a willingness to engage the moral tradition that identity represents.

Faith is not a political label.

It is a moral commitment.