



Former President Donald Trump speaks during a news conference at Trump Tower May 31, 2024, in New York. A day after a New York jury found Donald Trump guilty of 34 felony charges, the presumptive Republican presidential nominee addressed the conviction and likely attempt to cast his campaign in a new light. (AP/Julia Nihkinson)



by Brian Fraga

Staff Reporter

[View Author Profile](#)

[Join the Conversation](#)

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. [Learn more](#)

May 31, 2024

[Share on Bluesky](#)[Share on Facebook](#)[Share on Twitter](#)[Email to a friend](#)[Print](#)

Former President Donald Trump's May 30 [criminal conviction](#) on 34 counts of falsifying business records prompted a well-known former Catholic priest [to compare](#) his plight as a newly-convicted felon to that of Jesus Christ's during the Passion.

A correspondent for the EWTN-owned National Catholic Register shared a post on Facebook indicating that Trump's conviction had made her "more MAGA than ever," a reference to the former president's "Make America Great Again" campaign slogan.

Meanwhile, a progressive Catholic blogger and published author celebrated Trump's conviction by taking to social media and writing a post [on Patheos](#) with the headline, "At Long Last, A Criminal Verdict For Donald Trump."

The idea that U.S. Catholics are ["politically homeless"](#) because neither major party perfectly reflects the church's social teaching tradition was belied by Catholic reactions and "hot takes" to the news that 12 jurors had reached a unanimous verdict, at Trump's expense, after a little more than 10 hours of deliberations in a Manhattan courthouse.

Advertisement

Where progressive Catholics [saw a victory for the rule of law](#), their conservative coreligionists bemoaned what they considered a travesty of justice that they believe was engineered by President Joe Biden and financed by George Soros, the billionaire liberal hedge fund manager who is a popular target on the right.

Sen. Marco Rubio, a Florida Republican who is Catholic and often posts Scripture verses on his social media account, [urged his followers](#) to donate to Trump's campaign: "Don't just get angry about this travesty, get even!"

U.S. Rep. Nancy Pelosi, the former House Speaker and Democrat who has been a frequent target of conservative vitriol for her stances in favor of abortion rights,

described the news that Trump had become the first former U.S. president to become a convicted felon a "somber" moment for America.

"Trial by a jury of peers is a fundamental principle of democracy, which must be respected," Pelosi [wrote on X](#), the platform previously known as Twitter.

But even among non-elected Catholics, there was little sign that their shared religious faith had punctured the competing media silos and opposing ideological narratives that have contributed to the United States' well-documented political polarization.

Tony Annett, a Catholic economist and former International Monetary Fund official who leans progressive in some of his political opinions, [posted on X](#) that he did not understand the "hysterical reaction" from Republicans.

Annett wrote: "Trump wasn't convicted by Biden, the Democrats, or even the judge — he was convicted by a jury that carefully weighed the evidence it heard. Isn't that how it's supposed to work?"

According to conservative Catholics on social media, the system did not work the way the Founding Fathers envisioned it. They echoed narratives in right-wing secular media that framed Trump's month-long "hush money" trial in New York City as a "Deep State" takeover of the criminal justice system.

"Just a reminder that Joe Biden is the real criminal," Joshua Mercer, the editor of CatholicVote's Loop podcast, [wrote on X](#), the platform previously known as Twitter.

CatholicVote, [a controversial conservative political nonprofit](#) that [has endorsed Trump's bid](#) to return to the White House this election year, [over the course of an hour posted](#) several angry and alarmist comments on X responding to Trump's conviction.

"The country you grew up in no longer exists."

"Joe Biden is locking up his political opponent."

"Our nation is eroding."

Laura Ingraham, the right-wing Fox News opinion host [who converted to Catholicism](#) as an adult, articulated the fears of her fellow conservative coreligionists when she suggested in her evening show's opening monologue that the United States is on the verge of becoming a "banana republic."

"This is a disgraceful day for the United States. A day that America may never recover from," [Ingraham said](#).

Others in the U.S. conservative Catholic establishment voiced similar sentiments.

Kevin Roberts, a Catholic who has guided the Heritage Foundation, a legacy conservative think tank, [in a more Trump-aligned direction](#) under his tenure as president, described the verdict as "a travesty to our republic."

"This was a bogus prosecution engineered by President Biden and his weaponized DOJ that has made the New York justice system look like that of a third-world country where government officials engage in partisan prosecutions against their political opponents," [Roberts wrote](#) on X.

Kristan Hawkins, a lay Catholic woman who is president of Students for Life of America, a leading antiabortion group, [said](#) Trump's guilty verdict in New York City highlighted her family's desire to begin moving to a conservative state like Idaho.

"No one will be safe in this new banana republic, especially Conservative leaders. I encourage my friends to all find new home states that will uphold our Constitution," Hawkins wrote on X.

The only Catholic opinions that seemed to run counter to the mainstream liberal-conservative binary emerged from personalities on the fringes who normally move in hardline traditionalist circles.

Taylor Marshall, an outspoken traditionalist Catholic YouTube and podcast personality, [dismissed the idea](#) that Trump's more ardent supporters would foment a civil war, suggesting that the federal government, during the 2020 pandemic-inspired lockdowns, had "already tested resistance and found that it barely existed."

Writing "Guilty!" on X, Michael Matt, the editor of The Remnant, a traditionalist Catholic publication, [added](#): "Trump becomes Gotham's first felon president."

