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OPINION | MAIN STREET

# Joe Biden's Leap of Faith

It's not just abortion. The Democrats' stand on religious liberty should trouble voters.



By

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Joe Biden bows his head in prayer at a church in Wilmington, Del., June 1.

PHOTO: ANDREW HARNIK/ASSOCIATED PRESS

By now Joe Biden's rosary must be the most famous beads in the world.

"The cradle Catholic who carries a rosary wherever he goes," reports the Jesuit magazine *America*. "Biden almost always has rosary beads in his pocket," says the *Washington Post*. Even *Rolling Stone* piously chimes in, presenting the former vice president as a "practicing Catholic" who "wears his late son Beau's rosary on his wrist."



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abortion on demand, with no restrictions and paid for by taxpayer dollars where necessary.

 OPINION: POTOMAC WATCH



## Democrats Pitch Biden, Not His Agenda



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But in this election there's a new religious wrinkle, much more consequential than the tired debate over whether Mr. Biden is or isn't a good Catholic. For the issue today is no longer whether progressive dogmas from abortion and marriage equality to gender identity will prevail. Most already have.

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The question now is whether those who dissent from the new orthodoxy will be permitted to live their lives and run their institutions in accordance with their beliefs.

Let's start with nuns. A campaign ad released this month features Mr. Biden happily chatting with Catholic nuns on St. Peter's Square. These "lovely women," he says, have always inspired him because they are all about being their brothers' keeper. He even



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But Mr. Biden's policy preferences reveal a less friendly relationship with nuns. As part of ObamaCare, the administration in which he served issued a rule requiring Catholic care providers like the Little Sisters of the Poor to violate their convictions by paying for contraception and abortifacients for their employees or face ruinous fines.

The sisters have since won at the Supreme Court. Mr. Biden's response? Restore the mandate with the fake exemption the Little Sisters objected to in the first place. This is how "lovely women" who live out a vocation of tending to the least among us can expect to be treated under a Biden presidency.

Now unlike, say, his running mate Kamala Harris, you won't catch Mr. Biden talking about the Knights of Columbus as though it were a hate group whose members are unfit for federal judgeships. It's not his nature. Nevertheless a Biden-Harris administration would mean a federal bureaucracy less interested in accommodating religious Americans and their institutions than in constricting them. Democrats say so in their platform, in which they "reject" the "broad religious exemptions" that "allow businesses, medical providers, social service agencies and others to discriminate." In other words, religious liberty.

This is the sleeper threat. It's already playing out in everything from licensing requirements (the Supreme Court is now deciding whether Catholic agencies that don't place children with gay couples can offer foster care) and tax exemptions (Orthodox Jewish schools fear losing their status for adhering to biblical definitions of marriage) to conscience protections (a nurse in Vermont was forced to participate in arranging an abortion against her will). Mormons, meanwhile, wonder if the Equality Act, which is meant to protect LGBTQ Americans and is strongly backed by Mr. Biden and Ms. Harris, would make Brigham Young University students ineligible for federal research dollars,



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Because, as the New York Sun's Seth Lipsky says, it's hard to find a single religious-rights case where the Democrats took the religious side. He rattles off the list.

“Little Sisters of the Poor, Hosanna Tabor, the Green Family, the cake baker, the town of Greece, N.Y., the pharmacist who doesn't want to fulfill birth control prescriptions, the Satmar Hasidim who want to require modest dress in their stores, the regulation of circumcision, the Bladensburg Cross,” says Mr. Lipsky. “Name a case where the broad Democratic Party leadership sides with the religious party.”

President Trump was mocked when he said Mr. Biden would “hurt God and hurt the Bible.” But however inartful the words, today's Democratic Party is willing to use the full force of the federal bureaucracy to bring religious institutions to heel—no matter how genuinely Joe Biden may love his rosary beads.

“Joe Biden and Kamala Harris have this upside down,” says Bill Mumma, CEO and chairman of the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty. “The Constitution protects religion from government interference. But in their view, any government objective, no matter how controversial, takes priority over religious belief.”

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