



Presentation of the Lord – 02 February 2025

POPE FRANCIS WILL NOT VETO TRUMP'S VATICAN AMBASSADOR



Pope Francis is not expected to veto President Donald Trump's choice of a high-profile critic of his papacy as the next U.S. ambassador to the Holy See, according to two senior Vatican officials, despite misgivings about his stance on many issues. Brian Burch, who leads a right-wing advocacy group, has said the pope's pastoral

agenda, such as being more welcoming of LGBTQ Catholics, was causing "massive confusion" for the world's 1.4 billion Catholics. Trump nominated Burch for the Vatican role in December. At the time, Austen Ivereigh, a papal advisor who co-authored a book with Francis in 2020, said the Vatican had "every right" to refuse to accredit Burch as ambassador. The two Vatican officials, speaking to Reuters on background on a matter still under discussion, said Francis, who may need to appoint a new Vatican ambassador to the U.S. during Trump's four-year term, wanted to avoid a diplomatic scuffle and was not planning to veto the appointment. Burch, whose Senate confirmation hearing has not yet been scheduled, did not immediately respond to a request for comment at the time of his nomination, Burch said on X: "I am committed to working with leaders inside the Vatican and the new administration to promote the dignity of all people and the common good." Francis, leader of the global Church since 2013, is usually careful about engaging in political debates. But he has been sharply critical of some of the president's priorities, such as plans to deport millions of undocumented immigrants. On the eve of Trump's inauguration, the pope called the deportation program a "disgrace". Burch has been part of CatholicVote since 2005. In 2023, he sharply criticized the pope's decision to allow priests to give blessings to same-sex couples, and said a future pope would need to "clarify" some of Francis' teachings. Burch also accused the pope of governing the Church with a "pattern of vindictiveness," following Francis' 2023 decision to remove a Catholic bishop in Texas who had taken to posting right-wing material and conspiracy theories on social media.

Two former U.S. ambassadors to the Vatican told Reuters that Burch might have a difficult time making inroads among Vatican officials, given his criticism of the pope. "People in the Vatican, they read the news," said Ken Hackett, who served as President Barack Obama's ambassador from 2013-2017. "They don't like getting dissed or having negative things said about them or about the Holy Father." Francis Rooney, President George W. Bush's ambassador from 2005-2008, said Vatican officials consider their relationship with the U.S. administration very important, but are cautious about interacting with papal critics. "If the kitchen gets too hot on some of these issues publicly, that would certainly make (Vatican officials) draw back," said Rooney, a former Republican congressman. "The one person they're not going to get crosswise with is the pope." CatholicVote is known for being closely allied with Republican politics. In 2020, the group sent a guide to voters in swing states, describing Trump as aligned with Catholic teaching on issues such as abortion, religious freedom and healthcare. The guide did not mention Francis' criticisms of Trump. CatholicVote also collected data from people's cellphones as they attended Mass. The practice, called "geofencing," allowed the group to identify potential Catholic voters, and send them political ads favoring Trump, raising ethical concerns. Rev. Tom Reese, a U.S. Jesuit priest and commentator, said the Vatican expected ambassadors to push their country's agenda. "He's a lobbyist for the U.S. government in the Vatican," Reese said of Burch's future role. "But ... a lobbyist who's obnoxious is not going to accomplish much."

*Courtesy Joshua J. McElwee
National Catholic Reporter*

Remembered this Weekend

We remember all belong to us who have died. We also remember those who have died and are dying through violence, hunger and war.



Accord

Accord is now seeking marriage preparation facilitators. Might this be you? Accord Catholic Marriage Care Service CLG is currently recruiting volunteers to train as marriage preparation programme facilitators. If you are supportive of marriage in the Catholic Church and have the enthusiasm to be part of the Accord team that supports couples preparing for the Sacrament of Marriage then Accord wishes to hear from you. An Accord marriage preparation facilitator is a personally fulfilling role, blending life experience and faith. Successful applicants will receive professional training in the Accord marriage preparation programme and be part of a team delivering programmes locally. Contact Aisling at 01 5053112

marriagepreparation@accord.ie
further info: www.accord.ie



Towards Peace

Towards Peace is a service offering spiritual support for anybody who has been abused, physically emotionally, sexually, spiritually, in a religious/church environment. Towards Peace was established in October 2014 by the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference and the Association of Leaders of Missionary & Religious Leaders of Ireland. Office hours are Monday and Tuesday 9am to 4pm and Wednesday 9am to 12noon. For further information phone 01 5053028 or 086 7710533 or visit www.towardspeace.ie or <https://www.facebook.com/TowardsPeaceSpiritualSupportService/>.

PRESENTATION OF THE LORD

Penitential Rite

As we begin our celebration, we rejoice in Jesus the living Word.

You challenge us to be faithful to your word.
Lord have mercy

You challenge us to work for the poorest of the poor.
Christ have mercy

You challenge us to live our lives prophetically.
Lord have mercy

May our gracious God have mercy on us, forgive us our sin,
and bring us to life everlasting. Amen

Malachi 3:1-4

The Lord God says this: Look, I am going to send my messenger to prepare a way before me. And the Lord you are seeking will suddenly enter his Temple; and the angel of the covenant whom you are longing for, yes, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts. Who will be able to resist the day of his coming? Who will remain standing when he appears? For he is like the refiner's fire and the fuller's alkali. He will take his seat as refiner and purifier; he will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, and then they will make the offering to the Lord as it should be made. The offering of Judah and Jerusalem will then be welcomed by the Lord as in former days, as in the years of old.

Hebrews 2:14-18

Since all the children share the same blood and flesh, Jesus too shared equally in it, so that by his death he could take away all the power of the devil, who had power over death, and set free all those who had been held in slavery all their lives by the fear of death. For it was not the angels that he took to himself; he took to himself descent from Abraham. It was essential that he should in this way become completely like his brothers so that he could be a compassionate and trustworthy high priest of God's religion, able to atone for human sins. That is, because he has himself been through temptation he is able to help others who are tempted.

Alleluia, alleluia
The light to enlighten the pagans and the glory of your people Israel.
Alleluia!

Luke 2:22-40

When the day came for them to be purified as laid down by the Law of Moses, they took him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord- observing what stands written in the Law of the Lord: Every first-born male must be consecrated to the Lord- and also to offer in sacrifice, in accordance with what is said in the Law of the Lord, a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons. Now in Jerusalem there was a man named Simeon. He was an upright and devout man; he looked forward to Israel's comforting and the Holy Spirit rested on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death until he had set eyes on the Christ of the Lord. Prompted by the Spirit he came to the Temple and when the parents brought in the

child Jesus to do for him what the Law required, he took him into his arms and blessed God; and he said: 'Now, Master, you can let your servant go in peace, just as you promised; because my eyes have seen the salvation which you have prepared for all the nations to see, a light to enlighten the pagans and the glory of your people Israel'. As the child's father and mother stood there wondering at the things that were being said about him, Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, 'You see this child: he is destined for the fall and for the rising of many in Israel, destined to be a sign that is rejected, and a sword will pierce your own soul too so that the secret thoughts of many may be laid bare'. There was a prophetess also, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was well on in years. Her days of girlhood over, she had been married for seven years before becoming a widow. She was now eighty-four years old and never left the Temple, serving God night and day with fasting and prayer. She came by just at that moment and began to praise God; and she spoke of the child to all who looked forward to the deliverance of Jerusalem. When they had done everything the Law of the Lord required, they went back to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. Meanwhile the child grew to maturity, and he was filled with wisdom; and God's favour was with him.

Prayer of the Faithful

Father, Son and Spirit, you fill our lives with light and hope. We praise you. Lord hear us.

Lord, open our hearts to the beauty and power of your Word. Lord hear us.

May we live our lives prophetically, challenging the world to be a place of compassion, generosity and respect.
Lord hear us.

Too often those who are older, are dismissed as useless. May we learn from their life's experience and their wisdom. Lord hear us.

As we remember those belong to us who have died, may we be inspired to create a world where no one is dismissed, a world where there is no room for violence, hunger and war. Lord hear us.

In silence we put aside our own needs, no matter how important or urgent and we call to mind those who need our prayer and support.....Lord hear us

Reflection

Like the joy of the sea coming home to shore,
May the relief of laughter rinse through your soul.
As the wind loves to call things to dance,
May your gravity be lightened by grace.
Like the dignity of moonlight restoring the earth,
May your thoughts incline with reverence and respect.
As water takes whatever shape it is in,
So free may you be about who you become.
Feel that old age and aging is a time of great gathering, a time of sifting and a time of reaping the rewards of forgotten and neglected experience.
May your prayer of listening deepen enough
to hear in the depths the laughter of God.

John O'Donohue