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by NCR Staff

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In her September column for NCR, [Benedictine Sr. Joan Chittister asked](#): Who tricked us out of ourselves? As Americans waste our civil duties, the question has become whether the country itself has simply collapsed any and all moral standards, she said. Following are NCR reader responses to this opinion with letters that have been edited for length and clarity.

Thank you Sr. Joan for your column "Where are we getting our values these days?" You expressed my sentiments exactly. It is terrifying to think we could suffer through another Trump presidency. My question is: How can the more than 50% of Catholics who voted for him (twice) still consider themselves Catholics?

KATHRYN HEDBERG
Grangeville, Idaho



Sr. Joan in "Where are we getting our values these days?" has outdone herself! At 87 these days, her wits are perhaps sharper than ever. I am grateful for her prophetic voice. A prophet is not a person who tells the future but rather tells the present! And does she ever!

ROBERTA M. EISENBERG
Greenport, New York

Unlike Joan Chittister, Trump's escalator ride, though mildly interesting at the time, was not for me "a challenge of truth." Raised on the West Coast, apolitical and engrossed in clergy abuse survivors/advocacy work, the name Donald Trump meant nothing to me other than as the Boss of "The Apprentice" that I had watched briefly one evening while surfing the tube; as well, remembered clips of a very public divorce from his first wife.

Then came the debates and, like many Americans disenchanted with Obama, my interest in politics suddenly came alive when, one by one, outlier Trump made mincemeat out of each opponent. He decked them brilliantly like many of us abuse survivors wished at that time to expunge more than a few bishops and, in my case, one monsignor. I admired his courage and ability to call out the deceit and corruption lurking in swampy D.C., the mainstream media and in the his ultimate opponent, Hillary Clinton. Like King David, who was also accused of being a womanizer and a liar, Trump resonated as a new, gifted, powerful champion for those who have felt marginalized (or "deplored").

My decision to vote for him came midway through his edgy speech at the Al Smith / Catholic Charities 2016 dinner. And the visual of Catholic Speaker of the House, Nancy Pelosi, in 2020, viciously tearing in half Trump's State of the Union address strongly contributed to my happy decision to support President Trump in his bid for a second term.

NANCY MCGUNAGLE
Kalispell, Montana

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Joan Chittister's article knocked it out of the park for me. Few recognize that our culture is changing us.

We're satiated with negative headlines; we've become numb to them. Trump rants pepper every day as white noise. The values of yesteryear have dissolved into a cesspool of conflict, derision and blame. Because blame is the backbone of our current culture, there is one bombastic, narcissistic man who is the target of it all. He knows where the bodies are buried and must be ridiculed, attacked and vilified.

As adults, we recognize that politics has always been a dirty business. An overhaul is needed. We must look to a brighter future where values become the criteria of our actions. Looking backward at prior leaders does not move the needle to recovery any closer; it merely keeps hatred top of mind. Our future as a country is to model Jesus' behavior when the culture of his day was equally erratic.

Our culture is changing more rapidly than ever before and its effect is felt in everything we do and our future will have no resemblance to the culture we live in. Dwelling on Trump and the obvious hatred he incites has little bearing on co-creating a values-imbedded culture that we desperately need.

JANET HAUTER
Zionsville, Indiana

Sr. Chittister's insights into the destruction of our fragile democracy over the reign of King Trump were sobering. At 92, I have seen many decades of the human condition and its reflection in our national politics and governing. These last 2.5 years are the beginning of the criminal reckoning for our homophobe, xenophobe, racist, misogynist, sexual predator, (now secessionist), narcissist-in-chief, and his coup d'etat of Jan 6. I particularly resent 5-times-bone-spur-draft-dodger Trump's disdain for military dead heroes and injured soldiers, who he calls suckers and losers.

My concern for our nation's future is the daily realization that the Republican legislators, from all branches of national government, down through the states to local school boards are every day showing that they stridently support that autocratic narcissism. Moreover, probably half of Trump's 75 million voters will start the vote in 2024.

Coincidentally with my reading of sister's article, I also read a superb analysis of the same political condition written by David Corn at Mother Jones. He brilliantly traces these failings of GOP legislators all the way back to Eisenhower and McCarthyism, the John Birch Society, Nixon's racial "Southern Strategy," Christian Nationalism of both Bush terms, the antisemitic conspiracy-monger Pat Robertson, and on and on.

I guess at 92, I probably won't have to live through much more of this depressing scenario. But I'll leave it to the rest of you to find 90 million votes for Biden in 2024.

JOHN MINCK
Palo Alto, California