

# [***Bishop Threatens to Sue Catholic Magazine Over Trump Claim***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6C1M-WSP1-DY68-1001-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Length:** 655 words

**Byline:** Matthew Impelli

**Highlight:** Commonweal, a Catholic magazine, removed a paragraph from an article that mentioned the bishop following threats of legal action.

**Body**

A Minnesota bishop has threatened to sue a Catholic magazine this week over an article that connected him to former President [*Donald Trump*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/donald-trump?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships).

In April, *Commonweal* magazine published an article by Massimo Faggioli, a theology and religious studies professor at Villanova University, titled "Will Trumpism Spare Catholicism?"

The article warns of Trump's connection to the Catholic Church and Catholics' support of the former president ahead of the 2024 presidential election. Last month, a poll from the Pew Research Center found that 55 percent of Catholic voters leaned toward Trump, while 43 percent leaned toward President [*Joe Biden*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/joe-biden?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships). Some [*Catholics have been critical*](https://www.newsweek.com/pope-francis-culture-wars-woke-united-states-strickland-vatican-religion-catholic-church-1884988?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) of Biden's [*stance on abortion issues*](https://www.newsweek.com/joe-biden-abortion-harrison-butker-kansas-city-chiefs-politics-1900385?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships), and the poll found that the president received more support than Trump among those considered religiously unaffiliated.

"Just over six months out from the 2024 presidential election, it could be said that a 'Trump-Strickland' axis may be coming into existence. The 'Strickland' (as in Joseph Strickland, [*deposed bishop of Tyler, Texas*](https://www.newsweek.com/bishop-strickland-responds-removal-thousands-petition-1842937?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships)) might stand for those quarters of U.S. Catholicism drawn to performances like last month's Mar-a-Lago prayer event at the former president's residence, where Trump was presented as 'the only Catholic option' for voters," Faggioli wrote in the *Commonweal* article.

The article went on to mention Minnesota Bishop Robert Barron and his Word on Fire ministry, saying they were connected to Trump and his presidential campaign. However, that section of the article was removed after Barron threatened legal action.

"Editors' note: With the author's permission, the editors have removed a paragraph that originally appeared here because Bishop Robert Barron's media ministry, Word on Fire, informed us that they consider it slander for them to be in any way associated with Donald Trump or Trumpism," the updated *Commonweal* article said.

Speaking to *Newsweek*, the Word on Fire ministry said the exact phrase it provided to *Commonweal* in response to the article was this: "Word on Fire is a non-partisan, non-profit, Catholic apostolate dedicated to presenting and promoting the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the Catholic Faith."

"As a 501(c)3 organization, Word on Fire Catholic Ministries does not endorse or condemn any political candidates or political parties," the organization said.

*Newsweek* has contacted *Commonweal* magazine for comment via email.

Wednesday, the *National Catholic Register* obtained a letter the Word on Fire ministry sent to *Commonweal*. The ministry criticized the editors' note and said the letter should be considered a "formal notice to preserve all records in anticipation of litigation," the outlet reported.

"The Editor's note, with the author's permission, clearly was published with not only a reckless disregard for the truth and the publisher knowing that the statement was false but with what is clearly actual malice for WOF and its leadership," the letter said, according to the *National Catholic Register*.

In the letter, Word on Fire warned of litigation for any accusations that it was connected to ***politics***, the outlet reported.

On May 13, Larry Chapp, a former theology professor at DeSales University, penned an article in *The Catholic World Report* defending Barron. He said the *Commonweal* article was a "smear since there is not a shred of evidence that this is even remotely true."

"Does Bishop Barron speak out on the so-called 'culture wars'? Does he oppose woke cancel culture? Does he see something inchoately interesting and potentially important in the idiosyncratic weirdness and intensity of [*Jordan Peterson*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/jordan-peterson?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships)? Has he been somewhat critical—but not harshly so—of certain troubling elements in the Synod on synodality?" Chapp wrote. "The answer is 'Yes' to all of those questions—but not one of them makes someone part of a new 'Trump-Catholic axis.' I would also answer all of those questions with a 'Yes' and yet I am resolutely opposed to Trump."

[*Link to Image*](https://d.newsweek.com/en/full/2393369/catholic-church.jpg)

**Graphic**

Catholic church

Robert Alexander/Getty Images

The morning sun rises behind a stone cross atop The Cathedral Basilica of St. Francis of Assisi, commonly known as Saint Francis Cathedral, in Santa Fe, New Mexico. In May, 2024, a Bishop threatened legal action against a Catholic magazine over a claim about former President Donald Trump.

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