

Catholics pray for Paul Ryan's, Joe Biden's change of heart

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c. 2012 USA Today (RNS) Some Wisconsin Catholics are praying both Catholic vice presidential candidates will have a religious epiphany. They want GOP Rep. Paul Ryan to change his mind and heart about his deep-cuts budget, and Vice President Biden to turn against abortion rights.

Two Franciscans, Rhett Engelking, a layman, and the Rev. Michael Crosby, have launched a website Pray for Paul's Change of Heart with a special rosary prayer to St. Paul -- the most famous of converts who once condemned Christ until he saw the light on the road to Damascus.

While praising the congressman's sincere faith, they say they want Ryan to "reconnect with the compassion for the poor and vulnerable that is rooted in our consciences and articulated by the Catholic Church."

Their press release highlights the U.S. Catholic bishops' stance that the deep budget slashes fail to meet Catholic moral criteria to protect the poor and promote common good.

So far, that hasn't worked with Ryan. The "Nuns on the Bus" nine-state tour this summer paused at his district office to talk up the vision of a just and compassionate budget. Ryan didn't meet them there but later had a "cordial" private conversation with the leader of the tour.

"We agreed to disagree," Sister Simone Campbell, director of a Catholic advocacy group, Network, told The Daily Beast. "Actually, we both agreed that we care passionately about the future of this country. So we did find some common ground."

The Franciscan duo also calls for prayers for Biden that he will shift to oppose abortion and protect "the born and preborn."

They back up their pleas with links to the website of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.