

**Sean C. Thomas<sup>1</sup>**

Palm Beach Atlantic University  
United States of America

Original scientific paper

<https://doi.org/10.54561/prj1702353t>

Date received: February 6, 2023

Date accepted: May 25, 2023

## **A HOME FOR THE POLITICALLY HOMELESS? THE AMERICAN SOLIDARITY PARTY, CATHOLICS, AND THIRD PARTIES IN U.S. POLITICS**

### **Abstract**

U.S. Catholics in recent decades have been given the choice between Republicans and Democrats, representing two parties whose platforms diverge significantly from Catholic social teaching (CST). The American Solidarity Party (ASP) was founded on the same principles as CST, particularly consistent respect for the dignity of human life, including safeguards and support for the poor, vulnerable, and oppressed. Thus, it offers U.S. Catholic voters, as well as many other constituencies, an alternative that can greatly reduce their cognitive dissonance regarding CST in the voting process. However, this reduction in cognitive dissonance is balanced by the low probability of immediate electoral success. 71 ASP supporters were interviewed at length to ascertain why they support the party, how they view the party's internal dynamics, and what they hope to see the party achieve. The ASP attracts supporters committed to upholding human dignity. While members appreciate having finally a found a political home that respects their commitment, their characteristically principled stances often discord with other supporters' stances. They have developed novel strategies, perhaps shaped by their Christian Democratic ideologies, to navigate their differences to form a united front as they strive to promote, in conventional and unconventional ways, greater protection for human dignity.

**Keywords:** American Solidarity Party, Christian Democratic parties, U.S. politics, Catholics, third party politics, consistent life ethic

### **Introduction**

Despite his capabilities, David "Frost" Harris could not keep a job. Systemic factors kept him unemployed: a slow economic recovery, a lack of accommodations for the neurodivergent, the struggle of his native Roanoke, Virginia, to find its post-industrial economic identity, and governance that failed to address these issues adequately. He worshipped at a Pentecostal congregation, and, simultaneously, he loved what he was learning about Catholic social teaching (CST). Harris was infuriated that the two major U.S. political parties made claims to the Christian mantle, with

<sup>1</sup> Sean C. Thomas is a Ph.D. candidate in Practical Theology with a focus on Catholicism and World Affairs. His research brings an empirical approach to effectiveness and divergent viewpoints in faith-based institutions. Contact E-mail: seanthomas.theology@gmail.com

one claiming to support the vulnerable while offering no support for the unborn and the other claiming to represent the working class while its policies prioritized the wealthy over workers. Finding himself politically homeless, Harris decided to build his own home. In 2011, he and his fellow political nomads Kirk Morrison and Jack Quirk founded the American Solidarity Party<sup>2</sup> (ASP) to provide an option for voters like themselves to act publicly on their own terms.<sup>3</sup>

Currently, neither the Democratic nor the Republican Party promotes an agenda that fully embodies Catholic social teaching. CST encompasses not just a respect for the dignity of the poor, vulnerable, and oppressed, but also for their ultimate flourishing. Until the late 20th century, U.S. Catholics largely supported Democrats as the party that better represented laborers. However, as the Democratic Party became more uniform and strident in its advocacy for the availability of abortions, Catholic voters grew more divided in their partisan support,<sup>4</sup> as one party accorded with CST on the matter of abortion,<sup>5</sup> while the other party accorded with CST on many of the other contested issues.

As a result, Catholics have had basically one of two choices. The first choice has been simply to vote for a party that is seriously discordant with CST. Voters' choice of party could either have aligned with CST generally on various social justice issues or aligned with CST on the issue of abortion, but not both.<sup>6</sup> However, when Catholics have chosen to vote within the two-party system, they have largely voted on the basis of their existing partisan identifications which may, or may not, have been adopted on the basis of which aspect of CST they prioritized. The net result is that

<sup>2</sup> Initially, it was called the Christian Democratic Party-USA.

<sup>3</sup> David Harris, interview by author (henceforth, "I.B.A."), November 5, 2022; Kirk Morrison, I.B.A., November 21, 2022; Jack Quirk, I.B.A., November 4, 2022.

<sup>4</sup> William B. Prendergast, *The Catholic Voter in American Politics*, Georgetown University Press, Washington, 1999; Lyman A. Kellstedt and James L. Guth, Catholic Partisanship and the Presidential Vote in 2012: Testing Alternative Theories, *The Forum*, Vol. 11, No. 4, 2014, p. 628; Alan I. Abramowitz and Kyle L. Saunders, Exploring the Bases of Partisanship in the American Electorate: Social Identity vs. Ideology, *Political Research Quarterly*, Vol. 59, No. 2, 2006, pp. 177-182. It has been argued that the Church's insistence on prohibiting birth control in the John Paul II era alienated U.S. Catholics from the Church's teaching on abortion, and thus from anti-abortion political support, as it played into narratives besides the Church's support for the sanctity of human life; see John McGreevy, Catholics, Democrats, and the GOP in Contemporary America, *American Quarterly*, Vol. 59, No. 3, 2017, pp. 673-675. The issue of abortion is, of course, only one of three factors driving Catholic voters to greater heterogeneity supported by Stephen T. Mockabee, "Religion and Realignment: The 'Catholic Vote' in American Elections, 1952-2002," American Political Science Association, Chicago, 2004, p. 13, and John B. Ryan and Caitlin Milazzo, The South, the Suburbs, and the Vatican Too: Explaining Partisan Change Among Catholics, *Political Behavior*, Vol. 37, 2015, p. 460. These other factors are increased socioeconomic status (see Ted G. Jelen, "Religion and Public Opinion in the 1990s: An Empirical Overview," in: *Understanding Public Opinion*, Barbara Norrander and Clyde Wilcox (ed.), Congressional Quarterly, Washington, 1997) and increased contact by Republican social and campaign influences (see also Joan L. Fee, Party Identification Among Catholics, 1972, 1973, *Ethnicity*, Vol. 3, No. 1, 1976).

<sup>5</sup> According to most utilitarian assessments maximizing respect for human dignity as CST defines it, abortion would be the single most important contested policy issue. Of the policies concerned directly with the preservation of human life, abortion affects the most lives. It is, however, debatable whether to include issues that indirectly affect the preservation of human life. While poverty affects more people, no single contested policy is likely to solve it. While the lives that could be preserved according to a weighted probability of unrestricted thermonuclear war could be more numerous, neither major party has consistently contested the issue to a distinguishable degree of mitigated risk. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has also consistently assigned the abortion issue greater importance than any other single issue, as noted in Margaret R. Sammon, *The Politics of the U.S. Catholic Bishops: The Centrality of Abortion*, in: *Catholics and Politics: The Dynamic Tension between Faith and Power*, Kristin E. Heyer, Mark J. Rozell, and Michael A. Genovese (ed.), Georgetown University Press, Washington, DC, 2008.

<sup>6</sup> Of course, there are other parties on the ballot besides the Democratic and Republican parties. But the same situation holds true with regard to such third parties prior to the formation of the ASP. No third party on the ballot advanced policies that fully embodied Catholic Social Teaching.

relatively few Catholics appear to be seamless garment Catholics (SGCs)<sup>7</sup> – those Catholics whose political beliefs align with CST on all issues of political debate —, as, over time, the political stances of Catholics (and others) have become, particularly in an era of partisan polarization, more fully shaped by their partisan identifications than by their religious commitments.<sup>8</sup>

The second choice has been not to vote at all. Though there are a variety of reasons why Catholics choose not to vote, the end result is the same: non-voting Catholics cede decision-making to others, including those Catholics who have strong preferences as to which aspects of CST are neglected and which are supported. In the end, the net effect of these two choices has been that Catholics have voted for each major party in proportions that mirror the overall U.S. electorate.<sup>9</sup> Thus, it can be said that “there is no Catholic vote – and it’s important,”<sup>10</sup> with its importance stemming, in part, from the fact that Catholics comprise a large portion of the electorate.

### The American Solidarity Party

The American Solidarity Party offers Catholics an opportunity to cast their ballots for a party that fully embodies CST. Its foundation was inspired by the Christian Democratic political tradition in Europe and Latin America. The ASP embodies a consistent life ethic, which supports the protection of human life across the entirety of life: making expecting mothers’ lives better so they can more easily support their children, safeguarding the rights of the unborn, ensuring adequate child care, avoiding military conflict, and supporting the poor, vulnerable, and oppressed at the most effective level of community or government. The ASP also seeks to incen-

<sup>7</sup> Laura S. Antkowiak, Levi G. Allen, and Geoffrey C. Layman, Coping with Cross-Pressures: The Seamless Garment in Catholic Political Behavior, *Advances in Political Psychology*, Vol. 42, 2021, pp. 201-23.

<sup>8</sup> David E. Campbell, Geoffrey C. Layman, John C. Green and Nathanael G. Sumaktoyo, Putting Politics First: The Impact of Politics on American Religious and Secular Orientations, *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 62, No. 3, 2018, p. 564; David C. Leege and Paul D. Mueller, “How Catholic is the Catholic Vote?” in: *American Catholics & Civic Engagement: A Distinctive Voice*, Margaret O’Brien Steinfels (ed.), Rowman & Littlefield, Lanham, MD, 2004, pp. 213-250. Nonetheless, by virtue of their Catholic identity, many Catholics voters can never feel fully comfortable in either major party (see Clarke E. Cochran and David C. Cochran, *Catholics, Politics, & Public Policy*, Orbis, Maryknoll, 2003, pp. 11-22). The pressure on Catholics to choose a political side has seemed in recent decades to somewhat favor Republicans (see David Yamane, *The Catholic Church in State Politics: Negotiating Prophetic Demands & Political Realities*, Roman & Littlefield, Lanham, 2005, pp. 163-164), but Pope Francis’ emphases within CST has inconvenienced Republicans by repeatedly publicly re-revealing the incompatibility of CST with a single major U.S. political party (see Massimo Borghesi, *Catholic Discordance: Neoconservatism vs. the Field Hospital Church of Pope Francis*, Liturgical Press, Collegeville, 2021). Indeed, when Catholics discuss politics together in-person, convictions due to party identity have in short order subsided into CST-aligned positions consistent with a communitarian foundation (see William Bole, “Communitarian Lite,” in: *American Catholics & Civic Engagement: A Distinctive Voice*, Margaret O’Brien Steinfels (ed.), Rowman & Littlefield, Lanham, 2004, pp. 269-70), suggesting that their party identification, though captured in polling and other measures of Catholic individuals, may be for many an internal defense mechanism against dissonance than can be shed once safely among Catholics.

<sup>9</sup> Kellstedt and Guth, Catholic Partisanship, 637; Corwin E. Smidt, Catholics and the 2020 Presidential Election, *Politics and Religion Journal*, Vol. 15, No. 2, 2021, p. 285; William V. D’Antonio, Michele Dillon, and Mary L. Gautier, *American Catholics in Transition*, Rowman & Littlefield, Lanham, 2013; James L. Guth, “Religion and Republicans: The Presidential Election of 2012,” *American Political Science Association*, New Orleans, 2012, p. 3; Mark M. Gray, Paul M. Perl, and Mary E. Bendyna, Camelot Only Comes but Once? John F. Kerry and the Catholic Vote, *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 36, No. 2, 2006, p. 221.

<sup>10</sup> E. J. Dionne, Jr., “There Is No Catholic Vote – And It’s Important,” in: *American Catholics and Civic Engagement*, Margaret O’Brien Steinfels (ed.), Rowman and Littlefield, Lanham, 2004, p. 251.

tivize strong communities that can provide for Americans' social needs and to ensure the sustained ability of future generations to support themselves in a healthy environment. Their consistent life ethic and localist principles largely, if not entirely, overlap with the principles of solidarity and subsidiarity that are at the core of CST. As a political party, the ASP seeks to attract voters of all faiths as well as those with no religious affiliation who may support the principles and policies that the ASP advances. As a result, while Catholics may be attracted to the party, there are many non-Catholics who also find a political home in the ASP.

### **The ASP as a Political Home for Catholics?**

The emergence of the ASP created a third option for voters affiliated with the largest single faith tradition in the U.S. For new Catholic voters, the ASP could alleviate the cross-pressure they experience regarding which aspects of CST to emphasize. Its presence may also serve to move partisan Catholics to be Seamless Garment Catholics and find a new political home. The question, then, is whether the ASP can become a political home for Catholics.

In order to address this question, 71 ASP members were interviewed, equating to approximately 5% of all members. These interviews inquired about three different concerns. The first was the ASP's fitness to be a political home for Catholics on a personal level. In other words, what does the ASP have to offer Catholics that other parties do not, and what type of person supports the ASP? To assess the ASP's fitness as Catholics' political home on a personal level, the reasons for ASP member, or Solidarist,<sup>11</sup> support for their party will be presented.

The second concern related to the party's fitness as a political home on an interpersonal level given the party's internal diversity. Can Catholics get along well enough with the various types of politically homeless voters<sup>12</sup> who are all trying to make the ASP their home? To ascertain the party's fitness as Catholics' political home on an interpersonal level, the community dynamics of the ASP were examined.

The final concern related to whether the ASP can provide Catholics a home on an ecclesial level. Can one Catholic credibly recommend the party to a friend in their parish, regardless of that friend's desire for effectiveness when acting in the political arena? This depends on the ASP's institutional strategic objectives. To probe the ASP's fitness as Catholics' political home on an ecclesial level, interviewees were asked about their visions for the party.

<sup>11</sup> A helpful distinction: the capitalized term "Solidarist" is used to mean "of the American Solidarity Party" or "a member of the ASP," while the lower-case term "solidarist" is used to mean "adhering or pertaining to political principles based on solidarity," or "one whose politics are solidarist, whether a party member or not." The relationship between the two can be compared to the relationship between "Libertarian" and "libertarian."

<sup>12</sup> This is by no means meant to imply that there is a single "Catholic" voter type within the ASP.

## Research Design

The interviews were semi-structured: they almost always included the 10 standard questions presented in Table 1. However, the topics of the interviews were not bounded.

**Table 1. Standard Interview Questions**

Order	Question
1	Tell me what you love about the party.
2	How did you come to be a part of it?
3	What have you done with and for the party?
4	What should [Catholics (IF CATHOLIC); Christians (IF NON-CATHOLIC CHRISTIAN); Xs (IF X)] hope for from the ASP?
5	What impact do you want to see the ASP have on U.S. politics?
6	What impact do you want to see the ASP have on Christian engagement with U.S. politics?
7	What do you envision the ASP ultimately being?
8	Setting aside the obvious external challenges to third parties, what do you think is going to be the ASP's biggest challenge going forward?
9	What would you change about the party if you could?
10	If you were in my position, what would you write about the ASP?

Interviewees were generally selected by snowball sampling starting with Charles Camosy, one of the party's advisors, and supplemented by a limited number of volunteers responding to posts in ASP groups. The interviewees included all three founders of the party, leaders of all of its caucuses, non-Christian members of the party, former members, Solidarity National Committee (SNC) members, leaders of state and bio-regional chapters, people who have served in other party leadership roles, official advisors, candidates for public office, current elected government officials, and rank-and-file members.

Interviews were recorded and automatically transcribed using Otter.ai and were coded and analyzed using NVivo 12. The method used included elements of a grounded-theory approach. Confidentiality was offered to all interviewees, and interviewees' actual names were used only upon their approval.

Members who were not completely interviewed were not included in the analysis. Interviews with ASP-endorsed candidates who are not party members were included in analysis of everything but community dynamics. Interviews with former members were only included in analysis of the party's challenges. In cases wherein interviews do not meet the criteria for analysis, their data is displayed separately under the label "Non-Qualifying Solidarists."

## Findings

### Reasons for ASP Member Support

The interviewees offered many different reasons for why they support the ASP. These can be organized along five different themes: (1) political agreement, (2) conscientious self-expression, (3) values associated with conscientiousness, (4) societal benefits, and (5) a voice for the voiceless.

**Political Agreement.** Many interviewees (80%) stated they support the ASP for its alignment with their political beliefs. Representative expressions of this sentiment are “I love that their views match mine,”<sup>13</sup> and Catholics will “finally find a politics that aligns with Catholic social teaching.”<sup>14</sup> The chair of the SNC elaborated, “As a Catholic, my political views align with Catholic social teaching. ... We’re all equal because we’re all equally beloved children of God. ... The principles of the ASP begin from that basic premise.” She noted that there is an alternative foundational premise that leads to the same conclusion: “Every individual is a unique creature and therefore equal.” Therefore, “this doesn’t have to be a sectarian party.”<sup>15</sup> Indeed, one member with mixed Buddhist-Christian beliefs sees the same value in the party: as “a supporter of the consistent life ethic, ... the ASP represents my views.”<sup>16</sup>

**Table 2. Reasons for ASP support**

Aspect of ASP Valued	% of Qualifying Solidarists Expressing (n=54)	Mentions <sup>17</sup> Per Qualifying Solidarists Who Expressed It	% of Catholic Qualifying Solidarists Expressing (n=29)	Mentions Per Catholic Qualifying Solidarists Who Expressed It	% of Non-Qualifying Solidarists Expressing (n=15)
Political Beliefs	80	1.6	76	1.8	53
Broad Appeal	17	1.0	7	1.0	7
Centrism	9	1.0	14	1.0	13
Communitarian	28	1.1	31	1.1	7
Conscience	41	1.8	45	1.6	7
Ideological Consistency	24	1.3	17	1.4	27
Witness	11	1.3	14	1.3	0
Right Action	33	1.4	38	1.4	20
Positive Change	30	1.3	31	1.1	7
Advantages over Major Parties	39	1.4	41	1.3	13
Innovation	17	1.7	10	1.0	0
Negated Duopoly	13	1.6	7	1.5	13
Voice for the Voiceless	37	1.4	28	1.0	13

<sup>13</sup> Jeremy Miller, I.B.A., November 16, 2022. Jeremy is the chair of the Cascadia Solidarity Party. All descriptions of informants are accurate as of the time of writing, February, 2023, but may have changed in the intervening time.

<sup>14</sup> Christy Yao-Pellicioni, I.B.A., November 12, 2022.

<sup>15</sup> Lucy Moye, I.B.A., November 9, 2022.

<sup>16</sup> Amelia Johnson, I.B.A., November 14, 2022. Amelia is a transgender woman who ran one of the ASP’s most successful campaigns when she sought election as Clark County (Arkansas) Justice of the Peace.

<sup>17</sup> A mention is counted as any contiguous discussion of the theme in question; a mention may last as long as 5 minutes.

A variety of reasons related to political agreement were offered for membership support. Some (28% of interviewees) appreciated the ASP's communitarian values, which the ASP was founded to consistently espouse.<sup>18</sup> They spoke of "the responsibility of humans to one another within their communities, and the responsibility of the state to those communities and people to help both flourish."<sup>19</sup> Others (17% of all Solidarists, 7% of all Catholic Solidarists)<sup>20</sup> noted that the party not only represented their own beliefs better than competing parties but also better represented the beliefs of Americans in general, describing the ASP as "more representative of the values that Americans hold."<sup>21</sup> Another contingent (9%, Catholics 14%) noted that the ASP is "aiming for the center" while the duopolistic parties are "getting more and more extreme."<sup>22</sup>

**Conscientious Self-Expression.** Informants saw their party allegiance as due to more than mere ideological agreement. More than two-fifths (41%, Catholics 45%) of interviewees explicitly noted matters of conscience as motivating their involvement in the American Solidarity Party. Before they found the ASP, they were "compromising politically,"<sup>23</sup> or worse, "choosing between the lesser of two evils,"<sup>24</sup> leaving them feeling "torn"<sup>25</sup> and like they were "fracturing myself as a human," but with the ASP, they can "vote for something,"<sup>26</sup> namely "human dignity for everyone,"<sup>27</sup> and their conscience is "protected,"<sup>28</sup> making them feel "proud"<sup>29</sup> and letting them experience "a sense of hope and freedom."<sup>30</sup> One 67-year-old interviewee remarked, "I'm closer to meeting Jesus face-to-face than when I was 20. The good news is, as an ASP member, I can vote my conscience."<sup>31</sup> One poetic supporter warned "if someone can't live out their public life in a way that is true to themselves, it will warp their inner life, and that will crumble the façade. Encouraging a permanent hypocrisy of values does no one any good if they want to live their life in virtue or to serve the public virtuously."<sup>32</sup> The ASP's Vice-Presidential candidate in 2016, articulated the contrapositive: "knowing that your vote doesn't compromise your belief system is a lot better for an individual and their spiritual health."<sup>33</sup>

**Values Associated with Conscientiousness.** Solidarists support the ASP for

<sup>18</sup> Kevin Mauer, I.B.A., November 15, 2022. Kevin joined very shortly after the ASP was founded.

<sup>19</sup> Albert Thompson, I.B.A., November 10, 2022.

<sup>20</sup> In the text that follows, percentages reported for Solidarists will be presented first, and the percentage for Catholic Solidarists, if presented, will follow.

<sup>21</sup> Kathleen Lange, I.B.A., November 18, 2022.

<sup>22</sup> Matthew Bartko, I.B.A., November 2, 2022. After leaving the party, Matthew is working to create a PAC for solidarist candidates regardless of their party affiliation.

<sup>23</sup> Bill Fleming, I.B.A., November 7, 2022.

<sup>24</sup> Matt Bosley, I.B.A., November 13, 2022.

<sup>25</sup> Randy Miguel, I.B.A., November 22, 2022.

<sup>26</sup> Bonnie Kallis, I.B.A., November 10, 2022.

<sup>27</sup> Lauren Onak, I.B.A., November 18, 2022.

<sup>28</sup> Mark Crist, I.B.A., December 22, 2022. Mark founded the Liberty and Conscience Caucus.

<sup>29</sup> Desmond Silveira, I.B.A., November 5, 2022.

<sup>30</sup> Tai-Chi Kuo, I.B.A., October 30, 2022.

<sup>31</sup> Leslie Klinger, I.B.A., November 23, 2022.

<sup>32</sup> Eric Anton, I.B.A., November 16, 2022.

<sup>33</sup> Juan Muñoz, I.B.A., November 16, 2022.

many reasons that are corollary to its conscientious nature. These include the search for ideological consistency, the opportunity to provide Christian witness, their endeavor to engage in right action as Christians, and their desire for positive change. As evidenced by these four themes, Solidarists see their party as a place for conscientious believing and being, doing and improving.

Since many of its members' conscientious beliefs stem from a single morally primary first principle, they are seeking ideological consistency. One of the earliest members explained that the founders saw each major party as internally philosophically inconsistent. Just as the Libertarian Party was created on an ideologically grounded philosophical framework, the American Solidarity Party was built upon a Christian, communitarian framework.<sup>34</sup> The ASP's ideological consistency is a refreshing divergence from the norm, which is a "destructive... false sense of consistency;"<sup>35</sup> the ASP, on the other hand, "upholds the importance of all lives. It doesn't pick and choose which ones matter."<sup>36</sup> Nearly one-quarter (24%, Catholics 17%) appreciated the party's ideological consistency.

While most interviewees stressed the secular nature of the party, some expressed their appreciation of the party's ideological consistency in explicitly Christian terms. A teacher at a Christian school reasoned, "Jesus said, 'What God has joined together, let man not separate.' That can be applied to the planks of a political party. You should not have to choose between pro-life and pro-environment."<sup>37</sup>

Others (11%) saw the ASP acting as a Christian witness. The ASP provides "a witness for integrity and genuinely valuing other humans," "promotes a better vision of what the world could be like if humans were truly thriving together and not merely exploiting one another,"<sup>38</sup> and lends a "prophetic, influential voice in politics that can gain power and use it for the good of all people... while maintaining a witness to the values that Christians should have."<sup>39</sup>

A third (33%, Catholics 38%) said they dedicate their time to the ASP as part of their striving toward right action as Christians. Solidarists articulated that the ASP gives its supporters the opportunity to "practice their faith in the public square,"<sup>40</sup> "apply the concept of loving our neighbor as ourselves in the context of political action,"<sup>41</sup> and "do the work of practical theology."<sup>42</sup> One Catholic, realizing he sounded a little "declaratory," shared "it's the closest thing to what I believe Jesus's political party would be." While he thinks Jesus might choose not to engage with party politics, he labors for the ASP "as someone who is trying to follow in the footsteps of

<sup>34</sup> Mauer, interview.

<sup>35</sup> Dane Garrett, I.B.A., November 17, 2022.

<sup>36</sup> Erin Neely, I.B.A., November 22, 2022.

<sup>37</sup> Brian Huseland, I.B.A., November 23, 2022.

<sup>38</sup> Sarah Field, I.B.A., November 7-13, 2022.

<sup>39</sup> Joshua Perkins, I.B.A., November 18, 2022.

<sup>40</sup> Klinger, interview.

<sup>41</sup> Field, interview.

<sup>42</sup> Chris Butler, I.B.A., December 16, 2022. Pastor Chris is the executive leader of the AND Campaign, which shares much common ground with the ASP, as evidenced by the ASP endorsement for his Democratic primary run for IL-1.

Jesus, trying to take what he says seriously, applied to the political realm.<sup>443</sup>

A few Solidarists support the ASP because they expect it to bring increases in virtue. One Vice-Presidential candidate waxed that “giving people the option not to [sacrifice support of one belief to see their most preferred policy enacted] helps people be better people,” and opined that a country’s strength lies in its citizens’ virtue.<sup>444</sup>

Finally, 30% expressed pro-ASP sentiments that valued not only right action in and of itself but the positive changes of acting for the ASP. One gubernatorial candidate recalled thinking when he joined, “I would really love to advance society in a way that is compatible with my faith.”<sup>445</sup> One historian and SNC member saw that U.S. leaders “need to be looking at what the problem is, then identifying workable solutions that fit for both our national culture and our national political system. The ASP focuses on that, whereas the other parties focus on obscuring those.” He went on to profess that “a Christian has a duty to do the bare minimum, which is voting for candidates who are going to find solutions – or, if not, do the least damage – especially” for “vulnerable people in our neighborhoods.”<sup>446</sup>

**Societal Benefits.** Interviewees also noted a variety of societal benefits that motivated their support for ASP. They expressed that the ASP offered certain advantages that the two major parties could not provide, that it provided a space for exploring policy ideas, and that it afforded an opportunity to ameliorate some of the problems associated with the U.S.’s two-party system.

The innumerable mentions of the shortcomings of the major two U.S. political parties were not coded, except in relationship to some directly mentioned appeal of the ASP. However, even using this restrained coding of such mentions, 39% of informants still explicitly mentioned some appeal of the ASP in relationship to the two major parties. One Solidarist noted that, in contrast to the major party’s intolerance of internal dissent, ASP members “can maintain discussion. I’ve seen people change their minds here.”<sup>447</sup> Another, a stay-at-home mother, stated that she is “grateful for a party that supports the idea that this [being a stay-at-home mother] is a legitimate contribution to society (by contrast, Democrats seem to view raising children as some kind of *Handmaid’s Tale*, while Republicans see it as a kind of private enterprise for those who can afford it).”<sup>448</sup> An interviewee incised that neither major party “wants to serve God,” but rather each “wants to be God.”<sup>449</sup>

Because the ASP need not worry about the constraints of a party seeking immediate success, it has become a space for exploring innovative political ideas that have the potential to bring about societal improvements. The ASP is “an ideas fac-

<sup>43</sup> Muñoz, interview.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>45</sup> Silveira, interview.

<sup>46</sup> Thompson, interview.

<sup>47</sup> Anton, interview.

<sup>48</sup> Field, interview.

<sup>49</sup> Charles McGovern, I.B.A., November 11, 2022.

tory<sup>50</sup> that fulfils a “need” for “something new.”<sup>51</sup> One Solidarist elaborated, “at its best, the party is a place where people of different disciplines with similar goals can share and synthesize ideas for how best these goals may be achieved.”<sup>52</sup> Nearly one-fifth (17%, Catholic: 10%) appreciated the ASP’s innovative spirit.

Finally, a number of informants (13%, Catholics 7%) pointed to the ASP’s potential to break up the political duopoly and thereby ameliorate the problems it causes. It is important to note the distinction between Solidarists’ appreciation of the ASP over the Republican and Democratic parties and their appreciation of the ASP due to its potential to disrupt the duopolistic system itself. This constitutes a distinct appeal, as Solidarists said the duopoly prevents either [party] from being what they ought to be, despite the good things they have to offer.<sup>53</sup> According to an SNC member, the ASP has the potential to present “the major parties” with “good ideas” and “challenge” them to “implement them on behalf of the people. By creating that alternative intellectual space, we free the American people from the partisan trap” and help them challenge their political assumptions.<sup>54</sup>

**A Voice to the Politically Voiceless.** Over one-third of members (37%, Catholics 28%) emphasized the benefits not just for them personally but for many others. Christian members discussed how the party gives Christians a voice. One Catholic commented, “Catholics should hope for an ecumenical home, for a place where they can actually discuss their ideas and the consistent life ethic and not get run out of a party.”<sup>55</sup> Another cited the number of Catholics “who really do want a more consistent politics of human life and human dignity – and that’s something that doesn’t have to be restricted to Catholics. I think that we could really” be “a voice for that in American politics that would attract a lot of people.”<sup>56</sup> An Orthodox Christian gratefully said that Christians will find in the ASP “a party... that will listen to them, take them seriously, and not just use them.”<sup>57</sup> One Latter-Day Saint said the ASP gives “an opportunity for people of faith, especially Christians, to finally have a party that actually believes in and advocates for the things that Christians have been wanting to see for thousands of years.”<sup>58</sup> One evangelical shared how the party can “teach people how to be good Christian citizens outside of the context of unhealthy nationalism or an unbiblical marriage of religious and political authority,”<sup>59</sup> while another Catholic stated that the ASP’s very existence, “gives you something to point to and say ‘this is what I actually believe.’”<sup>60</sup>

The ASP does not just help Christians explain their religiously motivated politi-

<sup>50</sup> Thompson, interview.

<sup>51</sup> Huseland, interview.

<sup>52</sup> Field, interview.

<sup>53</sup> Huseland, interview.

<sup>54</sup> Thompson, interview.

<sup>55</sup> Andrew F., I.B.A., November 12, 2022.

<sup>56</sup> Edwin Tait, I.B.A., November 16, 2022.

<sup>57</sup> Trey Trapani, I.B.A., November 9, 2022. Trey is the founder of the ASP’s first student chapter, at the University of Missouri.

<sup>58</sup> Miguel, interview.

<sup>59</sup> Field, interview. More precisely, Sarah is a self-described “non-denominational Bible nerd.”

<sup>60</sup> Muñoz, interview.

cal beliefs. It also gives Muslims a voice. As a Muslim, Sami Omais pined, "If somehow the ASP can help push back, saying, 'No: people can have traditional opinions about these issues. And there's nothing wrong with that,' that would be a huge relief to the Muslim community." He feels that Muslims tend to support Democrats "not because they agree with Democrats on social issues, but because of the fear that if we don't support other minority groups, like the LGBT community, for example, we will lose our own rights." For Sami, the ASP's existence is "a great relief. Otherwise, it's suffocating to not have anything at all anywhere in American politics that speaks to what you actually believe. Otherwise, you're just hiding."<sup>61</sup>

Other religious people found the ASP giving them a voice too. A self-described Aristotelian Norse Neo-Pagan currently living in Jakarta lamented how Americans think if they discuss "religious theology, ... it's going to lead to endless culture war. We've managed to have endless culture war without any of that. At the same time, we're denying a significant source of our insights into how to address social issues." By its attention to various religious viewpoints, he sees the ASP offering an excellent example of bringing people together across religious groups.<sup>62</sup>

ASP supporters feel the party gives voice not just to religious people but to other communities. One Women's Caucus leader sees the ASP giving a voice to "the people who think, 'wait a minute, some of these Republican policies just aren't jiving with my compassionate [impulse],' especially women. ... They just haven't found us yet. Women... want to be whole-life, and not just anti-abortion."<sup>63</sup> Christian Democratic Parties in other countries tend to draw significant support from women, especially compared to conservative parties.<sup>64</sup>

## Community Dynamics

Table 3 presents the percentage of interviewees who mentioned various aspects related to community dynamics within the American Solidarity Party. Solidarists commented on the positive aspects of their community, their concerns for the party, and their initiatives to address these concerns.

<sup>61</sup> Sami Omais, I.B.A., November 14, 2022.

<sup>62</sup> Chris Travers, I.B.A., November 15, 2022.

<sup>63</sup> Sarah Bourque, I.B.A., November 22, 2022.

<sup>64</sup> Diana Z. O'Brien, "Righting" Conventional Wisdom: Women and Right Parties in Established Democracies, *Politics & Gender*, Vol. 14, No. 1, 2018, p. 33. See also Karen Celis and Silvia Ezreel, Beyond the Usual Suspects: Non-Left, Male and Non-Feminist MPs and the Substantive Representation of Women, *Government and Opposition*, Vol. 50, No. 1, 2013, pp. 59-60, and Kerri Ross, Susan Dodds, and Rachel A. Ankeny, A Matter of Conscience? The Democratic Significance of "Conscience Votes" in Legislating Bioethics in Australia, *Australian Journal of Social Issues*, Vol. 44, No. 2, 2009, pp. 132-133.

**Table 3. Community Dynamics**

Community Dynamic	% of Qualifying Solidarists Expressing	Mentions <sup>65</sup> Per Qualifying Solidarists Who Expressed It	% of Catholic Qualifying Solidarists Expressing	Mentions Per Catholic Qualifying Solidarists Who Expressed It	% of Non-Qualifying Solidarists Expressing
Community	46 (n=52)	1.7	46 (n=28)	1.8	24 (n=17)
Edification of the Christian Community	10	1.6	11	1.3	0
Pluralism	10	1.2	4	1.0	12
Principles	4	1.0	0	N/A	12
Civility	10	1.6	7	1.5	12
Goodwill	12	1.0	11	1.0	18
Contentious Discourse	63 (n=62)	3.5	65 (n=34)	3.8	29 (n=7)
On Same-Sex Marriage	39	2.2	41	2.4	0

**The Benefits of Community.** After a lifetime of living under the impression that they were alone in their political beliefs and conscientious commitments, many members felt lonely and hopeless before they found the ASP. Nearly half of the Solidarists (46%) expressed delight to have found community in the party. One expressed, “it’s just immensely validating to know that I’m not alone in some political no-man’s-land. ... I’m not merely one of a vague mass ‘unaffiliated’ or ‘undecided’ voters. ... I may feel like I’m in exile, but I’m not alone. There are others like me, working through the same issues and trying to spread the word.”<sup>66</sup> The leader of the Massachusetts party shared, “what I really love about the party... is that I get to go around Massachusetts meeting people who are really thoughtful, who are really devoted to the pro-life movement, but feel like the rhetoric of the major parties doesn’t represent them well. They’re all interesting, intelligent people... and people I have something in common with.”<sup>67</sup> The leader of the Latter-Day Saint Caucus said he and his co-believers feel a “sense of rest and belonging” in the ASP.<sup>68</sup> The former SNC Chair, said, “I’ve made lifelong friends in the party.”<sup>69</sup> Another supporter observed, “the Holy Spirit is bringing people together from different backgrounds for a common purpose, common cause, common sense. And I just think that’s beautiful.”<sup>70</sup>

Some Solidarists (10%) observed how the ASP has an edifying effect on the Christian community. One party member and sociology professor explained, “It seems counterintuitive, but by making your politics something that you conform more readily to what your faith is, putting it into practical application as explicitly political, you’re actually protecting your faith and worship tradition from being sub-

<sup>65</sup> A mention is counted as any contiguous discussion of the theme in question; a mention may last as long as 5 minutes.

<sup>66</sup> Field, interview.

<sup>67</sup> Onak, interview.

<sup>68</sup> Miguel, interview.

<sup>69</sup> Skylar Covich, I.B.A., November 11, 2022.

<sup>70</sup> Huseland, interview.

sumed by politics. . . . the ASP can help people have the proper separation between their politics and religion.”<sup>71</sup> One Solidarist expressed a related idea: “what Catholics can hope for from the ASP is a political movement that knows that it’s not as important as religion.”<sup>72</sup>

Other interviewees (10%, Catholics 4%) expressed their appreciation for the pluralism within the ASP. Given that it is a party composed of those who relish no longer being misfits, the party’s atmosphere is conducive to pluralism. One practitioner of a minority religion illuminated, “the ASP is a lot more pluralistic on religious matters than any of the other major – or even minor – parties.”<sup>73</sup> Another Solidarist noted the taboo in the major parties against supporting an appealing candidate from another party; in the ASP, however, “where we all know that we don’t fit in with normal conventional blocs and don’t have the power to permanently exclude or punish internal dissidents,” political pluralism is allowed to thrive.<sup>74</sup>

The American Solidarity Party also received praise for its greater civility. What one scholar loves most about the ASP is that in it, “You have peace, as opposed to . . . a return to puritanism . . . to try to impose unity. We don’t need unity, but we do need national harmony.” He quipped, “We’re not in the gutter like where Trump is: we’re soaring above Trump. We’re pelicans, right? We should be in the air.”<sup>75</sup> One-tenth of the interviewees expressed appreciation for ASP’s civility.

Finally, 12% noted that their love for the party came from the goodwill they see in its other members. One interviewee said, that, even though he did not fully agree with everything in the platform, “it still showed that they really cared about their fellow humans.”<sup>76</sup>

**Fractures Within the ASP.** When interviewees were asked about their greatest concerns for the party (Questions 8 and 9 in Table 1), by far the most voiced concern was the passionate disagreements on policy issues and its potential consequences (63%, Catholics 65%). The internal policy disagreements within the party include approaches to Covid restrictions, gun control, and the U.S. response to the war in Ukraine.<sup>77</sup> There is intense disagreement on gun control, which has led the party leadership to commit to abstain from any discussions regarding gun restrictions. However, the only point of disagreement expressed as a serious concern by an appreciable number of interviewees was same-sex marriage (39%, Catholics 41%).

Some of those who oppose same-sex marriage see that opposition as a key part of the party. There are others who support, at varying degrees of salience, same sex marriage and/or civil unions. There is also a sizeable contingent who remain personally undecided on the issue. Given the high public support for same-sex mar-

<sup>71</sup> Thompson, interview.

<sup>72</sup> Mauer, interview.

<sup>73</sup> Travers, interview.

<sup>74</sup> Anton, interview.

<sup>75</sup> Thompson, interview. The party has chosen the pelican as its symbol.

<sup>76</sup> Wargin, interview.

<sup>77</sup> The party houses both just-war-only and anti-war advocates. Typically, this presents no differences in policy outcome; however, when one state invades another for the purposes of conquest, the defender is almost by definition fighting a just war, so this distinction actually matters when the party decides its policy response.

riage and a perceived need for party growth, these latter two groups — and even many who personally oppose same-sex marriage — a strong incentive for the ASP not to publicly oppose same-sex marriage. Regardless of whether this manifests as support for same-sex marriage or silence on the issue, their stark opposition leaves the door ever open to the threat of conflict.

The current<sup>78</sup> *status quo* was set by the most recent convention, where a slim majority of delegates opposed same-sex marriage. However, it is unclear where the rank-and-file party members stand, as members elect delegates to the national convention more on the basis of name recognition, the member's level of involvement, and personal relationships than on the basis of issues. One pro-same-sex marriage member speculated that anti-same-sex marriage members organized to have an outsized delegate presence. One anti-same-sex marriage member noted that the major caucus wherein pro-same-sex marriage views are most accepted<sup>79</sup> represents roughly only 20% of the party. However, without hard data, the relative proportion of members' opinions with respect to positions on same-sex marriage remains unclear, and this allows each side to imagine an advantage.

While ASP members appreciate the robust discussion and find it generally to be civil, especially compared to other loci of U.S. political discourse, they admit it has gone too far on occasion. There have been times when rhetorically playing rough has resulted in members feeling hurt. Errors have gone unexcused and those who made them have been villainized, even after apologies and reparations were immediately offered. The party has even undergone a mass defection in response to rapidly lowered ambiguity of opinions within the party, when the 2017 National Committee members were voted out following a hotly contested 2018 National Committee election that many viewed as a referendum on the future of the party. Solidarists' concerns are founded on historical precedent.

**Responses to Political Diversity.** One response to the differences of opinion and political diversity within the ASP has been the formation of caucuses. One of the Liberation Caucus' co-founders came into the ASP "from the left" and soon "experienced very few but very disconcerting conversations with some conservatives in the party and some people... adjacent to the party." Realizing newcomers "wouldn't necessarily... know who's in the party and who's not, ... I wanted there to be a soft-landing spot for... people who share similar political views to mine." He founded the Liberation Caucus because of "my personal experience in joining the party. If there wasn't a group like ours within the party, then the party would continue drawing people in primarily from the right" and shift from a Christian Democratic party to a generic center-right party like other Christian Democratic parties have.<sup>80</sup> The founders of other caucuses expressed similar motivations.

<sup>78</sup> Please note that this article describes a dynamic political party at a particular moment in time: February 2023. Thus, a few details will have changed between the time of writing and the time of publication, as well as following the time of publication. For example, the nominating contest for the 2024 Presidential election was widely viewed as a referendum on the substantial issue of greatest candidate disagreement, namely the party's position on transgender questions.

<sup>79</sup> This caucus entertains a diversity of views on that issue and has no official position.

<sup>80</sup> Mike Vick, I.B.A., November 7-8, 2022. Mike is also a candidate for the 2024 Presidential nomination.

The party has responded not just to internal but also incoming political diversity. Small parties are subject to sudden, relatively large influxes resulting from major -party mishaps. These can make it difficult for a party to preserve the identity it has developed. To ensure the party maintains its identity, there is a Statement of Principles to which all members must agree. Four informants cited the party's principles or the Statement as one of the party's most appealing aspects. One Young Adult for Solidarity elaborated: "We all agree on the four core values (life, justice, peace, planet) and seven core principles (sanctity of life, social justice, community-oriented society, centrality of the family, economic security, care for the environment, international solidarity);" she also appreciates that there is room for interpretation of these principles among its membership.<sup>81</sup>

### Members' Goals for the ASP

While the American Solidarity Party has succeeded in getting a handful of local officials elected, generally speaking, the prospects of their immediate success are too low to serve as a motivating factor for its members' involvement. Solidarists must find their motivation from the pursuit of other measures of success. As can be seen from Table 4, the goals that members have for the party fall along a spectrum from simple self-expression to a desire to have a more immediate and direct positive impact.<sup>82</sup>

However, members express multiple aspirations simultaneously. They often shared their "dream scenario" before their "realistic" hope.<sup>83</sup> When asked about the proportions of party members who wish to see electoral success versus conscientious satisfaction, one particularly active Solidarist said, "I think most people are kind of split."<sup>84</sup> Broadly speaking, the goals of ASP members can be classified in terms of those related to experiencing personal satisfaction, influencing ideas, influencing policy, winning elections, and effecting change beyond the political system.

**Experiencing Personal Satisfaction.** Half of those interviewed (48%, Catholics 52%) indicated that they were looking for a space to experience satisfaction rather than indignation with politics. In some cases, they are seeking a group that allows them to express their voice. A typical desire was "just to see our values expressed."<sup>85</sup> This was expressed in terms of conscience too: "a significant number of people do not vote for a candidate they like; they are voting against a candidate they fear. More people should be able to vote their conscience."<sup>86</sup> When another Solidarist was asked what impact he wanted the ASP to have on U.S. politics, he answered, "to not lose our identity. I have no problem with being a forever third party, because I absolutely dislike the hypocrisy of values. . . . I have no desire to be another cheap counterfeit of the major two [parties]."<sup>87</sup>

---

<sup>81</sup> Neely, interview.

<sup>82</sup> The presentation of these goals proceeds along this spectrum.

<sup>83</sup> Vick, interview.

<sup>84</sup> Shane Hoffman, I.B.A., November 13, 2022.

<sup>85</sup> Miller, interview.

<sup>86</sup> Hoffman, interview.

<sup>87</sup> Anton, interview.

Table 4. Objectives

Goal	% of Qualifying Solidarists Expressing (n=54)	Mentions <sup>88</sup> Per Qualifying Solidarists Who Expressed It	% of Catholic Solidarists Expressing (n=29)	Mentions Per Catholic Qualifying Solidarists Who Expressed It	% of Non-Qualifying Solidarists Expressing (n=15)
Self-Expression	44	1.6	45	1.5	20
Satisfied Conscience	17	1.2	17	1.2	13
Thought Incubator	9	2.2	13	3.0	7
Visible Alternative	67	1.6	55	1.4	20
Biggest Third Party	30	1.1	31	1.0	0
Winning Local	52	1.4	55	1.4	20
Eventual Competitvity	41	1.2	38	1.2	33
PAC	2	4.0	3	4.0	7
Forced Adoption	35	1.3	34	1.1	27
Part of a Multi-Party System	33	1.2	34	1.0	20
Major Party	41	1.5	41	1.5	27
Culture Change	24	1.2	24	1.1	13
Improve Lives	33	1.9	34	1.4	47

**Influencing Ideas.** Some Solidarists noted that having an influence in the marketplace of ideas was a reasonable goal for the party. Some thought the ASP could serve as a “thought incubator,” by articulating and evaluating novel policy ideas. Two-thirds of the interviewees (67%, Catholics 55%) stated they wanted the ASP to demonstrate, at a minimum, that there are alternatives to the way politics is conducted currently. One statement encapsulated the sentiment: “When ASP people run for office, they may not win, but they help to spread the message that there is a better vision than the one provided by either Republicans or Democrats. And I think just having that vision – getting that narrative of thriving through solidarity into people’s heads – is important.”<sup>89</sup> One ASP-endorsed candidate emphasized the party’s focus on acting differently even from other minor parties, participating in conversations to “develop strategies that don’t look like all the rest of the third parties,” so that it “is as fresh, different, and potentially politically impactful, as the platform itself.”<sup>90</sup>

**Influencing Policy.** A third goal mentioned by interviewees was to influence policy. There is precedent for third party success in influencing both ideas and policy.<sup>91</sup> Ultimately, most members would probably admit that it makes no sense for them to labor for the ASP if there is no eventual hope for influencing policymaking

<sup>88</sup> A mention is counted as any contiguous discussion of the theme in question; a mention may last as long as 5 minutes.

<sup>89</sup> Field, interview.

<sup>90</sup> Butler, interview.

<sup>91</sup> Robin E. Best and Steve B. Lem, Electoral Volatility, Competition and Third-Party Candidacies in US Gubernatorial Elections, *Party Politics*, Vol. 17, No. 5, 2010, p. 625.

decisions. As a third party, one way to influence policy is to articulate policies that may become credible options for major parties and their candidates to adopt.<sup>92</sup> Another way for the ASP to influence policy is to win local elections, with 52% of the interviewees (55% of Catholics) expressing hope that the party can win local races. Based on a geographically delimited analysis, this would represent a significant accomplishment for a third party.<sup>93</sup> One Young Adult for Solidarity leader postulated, "The best impact we could realistically have is at the local level, because that's just generally good strategy for third parties [and] because the ASP believes in subsidiarity: local government when possible."<sup>94</sup> A Pennsylvanian Solidarist described an opportunity within the Philadelphia City Council, which reserves two seats for minor parties, citing specific local issues the ASP could run on. "It's so mundane. It's about picking up the trash, but we can also infuse that with a distinctly community-focused ethos. There's a real strength there."<sup>95</sup> Running local candidates also serves to keep the local party machine healthy until candidates achieve full viability.<sup>96</sup> The ASP has actually already won a handful of local races.

A substantial number of the interviewees (41%) expressed the hope that they would see the ASP eventually become electorally competitive. Harris hoped for this when he founded the party.<sup>97</sup> A typical aspiration was to win "seats in Congress or the Presidency at some point," though it "might not happen in my lifetime."<sup>98</sup> One Texan member mused that maybe "in 20 years' time, we'll be the ones that Republicans are screaming about."<sup>99</sup> One active immigrant solidarist "can't vote anyway, so I might as well try to build up an alternative that someday might be a viable alternative."<sup>100</sup>

Forcing a major party to adopt the party,<sup>101</sup> its platform,<sup>102</sup> and/or its constituents<sup>103</sup> is a common aspiration for third party supporters, including 35% of solidarists interviewed. Typical goals were "forcing a Democrat or Republican to lose a Senate seat, because the ASP took too many votes away from them," and, consequently, "to push both parties towards our platform"<sup>104</sup> and present voters with "something new that repossesses votes from one or both of the bankrupt incumbent parties, in order to motivate them to change."<sup>105</sup> A two-time Congressional candidate frankly

<sup>92</sup> Daniel J. Lee, Third-Party Threat and the Dimensionality of Major-Party Roll Call Voting, *Public Choice*, Vol. 159, 2014, p. 529.

<sup>93</sup> Ben Schuerman, Third Parties and City Council Elections, *Xavier Journal of Politics*, Vol. 1, 2010, pp. 75-7.

<sup>94</sup> Interview with Solidarist, November 22, 2022.

<sup>95</sup> F., interview.

<sup>96</sup> Marc Guinjoan i Cesena, "Set on Competing: Contamination Effects and Parties' Entry Decisions in Mass Elections," Ph.D. diss., Universitat Pompeu Fabra, 2012, p. 222.

<sup>97</sup> Harris, interview.

<sup>98</sup> Black, interview. Oliver ran for U.S. Congress.

<sup>99</sup> Muñoz, interview.

<sup>100</sup> Tait, interview.

<sup>101</sup> Bryan McGraw, Europe's Christian Democratic Parties and American Possibilities, *Perspectives on Political Science*, Vol. 46, No. 1, 2017, p. 63.

<sup>102</sup> Colin Copus, Alistair Clark, Herwig Reynaert, and Kristof Steyvers, Minor Party and Independent Politics beyond the Mainstream: Fluctuating Fortunes but a Permanent Presence, *Parliamentary Affairs*, Vol. 62, No. 1, 2009, p. 12.

<sup>103</sup> Ross, Dodds, and Ankeny, Matter of Conscience, 133-4.

<sup>104</sup> George Yancey, I.B.A., November 28, 2022.

<sup>105</sup> Paul Schultz, I.B.A., November 12, 2022.

proclaimed “I don’t mind not winning a race if another candidate decides that they need to pick up the policies I was running with.” He also said that if “we get the major parties to start accepting a more whole-life view of our country, that’s a victory for us.”<sup>106</sup> One member laid out his strategic vision for the party:

We live in an era of very close elections because they have an army of strategists and billions of dollars of ads. They’re very equally matched, because they’re always filling in any electoral gap that opens up. Without those resources, we’re not able to compete in that environment. But what we do have is a superior ideology, a philosophically consistent ideology. That’s what we need to emphasize and cultivate within the movement so as to really change the public understanding of politics just by having superior ideas. Those are going to change hearts and minds. They’re going to change both major political parties.<sup>107</sup>

**Winning Elections.** Some members want to see the ASP win enough elections to govern as part of a multi-party system. One-third of the interviewees noted that they would be happy to see this outcome. The SNC chair said, “I would just like to bulldoze a hole in the duopoly, quite frankly.”<sup>108</sup> One state leader said “I would like to see the party be a viable contender in a multi-party political economy.”<sup>109</sup> He is fostering plans for strategic cooperation among the state’s minor parties, an astute strategy for success in single-member plurality systems.<sup>110</sup> Another member envisions a new balance of U.S. political parties: “I would like to see there be four big parties: Libertarian Party, Republican Party, Democratic Party, ASP,” representing “the four quadrants on the political map of economic and social control.”<sup>111</sup> In fact, many Solidarist informants (41%) expressed a hope for the ASP to become a major party. This was typically expressed as, “We have a real possibility of surpassing one of the two major parties.”<sup>112</sup>

**Cultural Change.**<sup>113</sup> Many (24%) Solidarists perceive a need for changes to the culture; some express this as a pre-requisite for ASP electoral success. Electoral reforms designed to induce a shift from a two-party system to a multi-party system have failed when the underlying cultural substructure does not support it.<sup>114</sup>

Others desire cultural change as a higher good than winning elections. Brian Carroll, the 2020 ASP Presidential nominee, expressed this dual purpose: “Our goal is not to just to take power away from the duopoly parties. Our goal is to change the climate of America in favor of life, in favor of middle-class working people, in favor

<sup>106</sup> Hoffman, interview.

<sup>107</sup> Mauer, interview. His blog, an early locus of party member contact, called on its readers to go politically neither left nor right but deeper.

<sup>108</sup> Moye, interview.

<sup>109</sup> Everett DePangher, I.B.A., November 14, 2022

<sup>110</sup> Thomas Schwartz, Parties, *Constitutional Political Economy*, Vol. 32, 2021, p. 471.

<sup>111</sup> Perkins, interview.

<sup>112</sup> Jack Ternan, I.B.A., November 6, 2022.

<sup>113</sup> As politics flows from culture, a change in culture constitutes a change in politics, and thus falls farther toward the direct-action end of the spectrum than mere changes to policy.

<sup>114</sup> Peter Siavelis, Continuity and Change in the Chilean Party System: On the Transformational Effects of Electoral Reform, *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 6, 1997, p. 671.

of freedom of religion.”<sup>115</sup> His fellow primary candidate, who is “slightly worried... about a second civil war” hopes that by “bringing in people of goodwill from all across the political spectrum who can support our ideals, we can turn the temperature down a bit.”<sup>116</sup>

One Solidarist elected City Attorney of Sheboygan, Wisconsin, hoped that the ASP could change the culture of the pro-life movement, since the ASP is a pro-life party that is “focused on [reducing abortion] demand rather than supply,” and one that enables people “to see the life issue as much, much larger, encompassing the preborn, elderly people, those in need of healthcare, persons with disabilities, criminals, [particularly] those on death row,” and more.<sup>117</sup>

Solidarists want to see the ASP’s presence change the culture within the Church in the U.S. as well. One Catholic stated “if we could get Christians to not compromise their theological conviction but allow their theology to be shaped by the Bible and by the [Christian tradition] rather than by modern culture wars and politics, I think that’d be great for individual Christians and for the Church (both denominations and the Church as a whole).”<sup>118</sup> There is evidence that religiosity inoculates against populism.<sup>119</sup> Another Catholic expressed the hope that solidarist politics “will start to help heal rifts within Christendom and will start to repair the damage that has been done to our public witness here in America. ... because what’s going on right now is not biblical. It’s not helpful. It’s ripping us apart.”<sup>120</sup>

**Improving Lives.** The ultimate goal of governance is to improve lives; with this in mind, 33% of Solidarists want to see the party directly benefit community members, regardless of whether it does it through government offices or not. This ethos of imparting benefits rather than withholding them in order to increase the urgency of a party’s electoral success is a noteworthy divergence from the norm of postwar U.S. politics. One recent SNC member succinctly stated, “It’s important to focus on issues, but we have to focus on humans.”<sup>121</sup> One strategist suggested that, since the ASP does not “have a chance to get elected immediately,” it “can actually build a philosophy” by building “a base of volunteers who care enough about civic society” to get on “local boards and commissions” with “the purpose of looking out for your neighbors and securing common dignity for everyone.”<sup>122</sup> One Cascadia Solidarity Party leader has a grand vision for eventual ASP electoral success, one component of which involves the party bringing Cascadians tangible benefits through community initiatives prior to any electoral victories; he sees the party offering distinct advantages over NGOs, which more conventionally do this work.<sup>123</sup>

<sup>115</sup> Brian Carroll, I.B.A., November 1, 2022.

<sup>116</sup> Perkins, interview.

<sup>117</sup> Chuck Adams, I.B.A., November 17, 2022.

<sup>118</sup> Perkins, interview.

<sup>119</sup> Tobias Cremer, *A Religious Vaccination? How Christian Communities React to Right-Wing Populism in Germany, France and the US, Government and Opposition*, Vol. 58, 2023, p. 177.

<sup>120</sup> Vick, interview.

<sup>121</sup> Kallis, interview.

<sup>122</sup> Thompson, interview.

<sup>123</sup> Matthew McNatt, I.B.A., November 15, 2022.

## Discussion

If the ASP's supporters are united by anything, it is a personalist political philosophy like that of Maritain and Wojtyła,<sup>124</sup> as the politics of the ASP's supporters are driven by the high value they place on human dignity. This personalist political philosophy is at the core of the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, which, on the basis of respecting human dignity, promotes (1) the common good, (2) common stewardship of resources, (3) subsidiarity, (4) political participation, and (5) solidarity.<sup>125</sup> Although few Catholics may have read the Compendium, nearly all are familiar with these principles, at least to some degree,<sup>126</sup> via homilies, parish social contact, education, and digital and print media.

While many Catholics are receptive to the principles listed above, the Catholics who have joined the ASP to this point are distinctive in their commitment to personal consistency.<sup>127</sup> This prevents them from supporting either Democrats or Republicans because they deeply desire to act fully in accord with their Catholic faith in all areas of their life, including the political. They believe in Catholic Social Teaching and its major principles, and they cannot bear the internal inconsistency of sacrificing any of its principles that they hold so dear.

Those who join the ASP quickly develop bonds with other ASP members due to the uplifting discovery of finding others who are committed to the same principles. Nevertheless, despite their shared principles, members can soon discover that there are still some potentially salient differences of political opinion. The history of ideologically grounded third parties in U.S. politics is a story of fracture. Those who join third parties seeking to find satisfaction in shared political convictions frequently have no problem choosing to form another political party if there are enough like-minded party members who remain in the minority on one or more sufficiently salient issues.

The ASP may have found a potential solution for holding the center. There have been multiple instances within the party where a caucus forms to represent those who find themselves furthest from the balance of power.<sup>128</sup> Members have formed caucuses in response to perceived "blind spots" within the party concerning how some position on an issue is consistent with the party's principles, albeit not in a way that was immediately obvious to most of its members. The founders of the Education Caucus and the LGBT Caucus created their caucuses for this sort of policy advocacy, as well as to represent a con-

<sup>124</sup> Samuel Moyn, "Personalism, Community, and the Origins of Human Rights," in: *Human Rights in the Twentieth Century*, Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann (ed.), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, 2011, pp. 91-106.

<sup>125</sup> Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, "Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church," Vatican, Vatican, 2004, nos. 160-96.

<sup>126</sup> If not by name, then by having a sense of the spirit of the principles.

<sup>127</sup> They are also distinctive for even having heard of the ASP.

<sup>128</sup> The Dorothy Day Caucus (later rebranded *Imago Dei* Politics) in 2017 and the Liberation Caucus in 2021.

stituent group.<sup>129</sup> Other caucuses are more purely representational in nature. Moreover, other, more informal networks function similarly to organized caucuses. That ASP members founded these groups reflects the esteem in which Solidarists hold subsidiarity and sphere sovereignty. Perhaps this explains why the ASP developed caucuses as a solution whereas other parties, though they also struggle to hold the center, have not. The existence of caucuses constitutes an attempt to ensure that the party's notion of its members' common good considers all its members.

In other minor parties, any of these groups could be the precursors to breakaway parties. The members of the ASP are committed to their beliefs not merely as an end in itself but because they earnestly believe enacting solidarist principles is best for society's common good. Solidarists' commitment to society's common good incentivizes them to act for the ASP's common good.

A common commitment to political principles and goals is not always enough to maintain unity, nor is the high value Christians place on universal fraternity. The surest way to prevent fracture is to build meaningful friendships between members of rival groups at both the leadership and non-leadership levels. Video and/or in-person communication is key. At the time of this writing, there are nascent efforts to do this.<sup>130</sup>

Given the well-noted diversity of the Catholic vote,<sup>131</sup> it is very difficult for one party to give a home to Catholics across the political spectrum. The ASP's caucus system gives it structures that would make it possible to do so. The ASP will be a healthier party if it draws as much from the "Catholic ethos of inclusive dissent and loyalty"<sup>132</sup> as it does from Catholic social teaching.

Solidarists differed in the kind and level of success they hope to see. Every member knows that the current system of electoral laws offers the party no advantages. Despite the obstacles faced, members have many strategies – ranging from the tried-and-true to the novel and from the novel to the grand strategic vision – to achieve this success.

The question remains whether the ASP can attract more voters to support the party. Conventional wisdom and history suggest that any such expectations are best placed on the low side. Nevertheless, there are some factors that indicate the ASP could overcome its challenges under the right conditions. With virtually zero name recognition,<sup>133</sup> the ASP has grown exponentially, with its membership increasing by an order of magnitude every 4-year cycle.<sup>134</sup> The

---

<sup>129</sup> Brian Talbot, I.B.A., December 21, 2022; Interview with solidarist, November 11, 2022.

<sup>130</sup> Indeed, as of July 2023, these party leaders have followed through.

<sup>131</sup> Kellstedt and Guth, *Catholic Partisanship*, 638.

<sup>132</sup> D'Antonio, Dillon, and Gautier, *American Catholics*, 56.

<sup>133</sup> One could even read the entirety of a political science database and find but one passing scholarly mention of the party: Adam Trahan, *Public Attitudes Toward Legal Abortion, Euthanasia, Suicide, and Capital Punishment: Partial Evidence of a Consistent Life Ethic*, *Criminal Justice Review*, Vol. 42, No. 1, 2017, p. 29.

<sup>134</sup> At that rate, the entire U.S. population would be voting for the ASP's Presidential candidate between 2032 and 2036.

voting population is not growing as fast as the ASP, so its growth must level off at some point, but the rate of its growth suggests that any of its members' desired outcomes is possible.

Outside factors will likely do more to shape the extent of the party's growth, as the ASP's growth over the past two presidential election cycles has coincided with the nomination of particularly unpopular major-party candidates.

Still, there seems to be a sizeable sector of the U.S. electorate in which the ASP could grow. Since Harris founded the ASP, there have been multiple successful U.S. television programs whose appeal to audience members was that they allowed them to experience, in grounded escapism, politicians who choose not to succumb to political expediency and, instead, choose to do what is right. These programs are market-based evidence<sup>135</sup> that a large contingent of Americans desire their politicians to act according to their consciences when they conflict with their narrow self-interests.

In the end, can the ASP, and Solidarist Catholics in particular, make enough of a difference that they can convince those Catholics concerned primarily about pragmatism to support the ASP? One factor undoubtedly shaping the answer to this question is the expected longevity of the party itself. If the ASP lingers in obscurity, filling a niche for only those most committed to ideological consistency, then it will give Catholics a stable home as long as they can tolerate toil without reward in their lifetime. If the ASP were to become a major party, then even the most pragmatic Catholics could find comprehensive comfort within its ranks. Instability lies in middling success: if the party and many of its policies were to be absorbed into one of the major parties, the answer is less clear, as the party's continuance therein as an well-defined organized force within such a party is questionable. Moreover, sharing such a big tent with others would likely mean that their new party would ask solidarists to vote for non-solidarist candidates. If the ASP is to prevent its absorption, it will need to have the appropriate structures in place before it poses enough of a threat to the duopoly to cause a major party to try to force its adoption.

Of course, given that its goals as an organization are not yet fixed, it is not clear what the ASP and its supporters might choose to do if a major party were to decide to advance a number of solidarist policy proposals. Rare is the beggar who insists upon choosing.

<sup>135</sup> Among these programs are *Designated Survivor* and *Madame Secretary*. In 2016, 30-second ad buys for these shows cost \$162,616 and \$101,778, respectively (Jeanine Poggi, "TV Ad Pricing Chart: A Show in Its 13th Season Returns to the Top 10 Most Expensive Buys," *AdAge*. Available at: <https://adage.com/article/news/tv-ad-pricing-chart/305899> (accessed February 4, 2023)). In that year, their appeal came despite the fact that it was a major election year, in which major-party politicians were seeking to maximize their presentability.

## Conclusion

The American Solidarity Party is a home for conscientious objectors to the *status quo* of U.S. politics. Its members have fostered a meaningful sense of community, even though they do not agree on everything. The ASP has reasonable goals and strategies to attain them.

The ASP gives those committed to personalism in politics, that is, a philosophy of universal respect for human dignity, a political voice and home. Many Catholics share this commitment, and many more have the latent potential to develop it. If Catholics are to make the ASP their home, they will need to negotiate their own principled convictions internally and externally. Internally, the party's system of caucuses gives Catholics the opportunity to create a home tailored to their needs within a complex of others who are seeking similar visions of the common good. How many Catholics the ASP can attract is unclear. If the ASP is unable to retain large numbers of attracted Catholics, the party will likely continue to be a home for purist SGCs unconcerned with even eventual victory. If the party expands in its membership and one of the major parties seeks to absorb its members by adopting a variety of its policy proposals, then it will be more difficult for Catholics to maintain a sense of the party being a special home for Catholics. Still, the Solidarist legacy of caucus formation may salvage the possibility of a home for Catholics within one of the major parties, though perhaps a less satisfactory one.

Future research will determine the profile and proportion of Catholics who would support the ASP under various circumstances. A more thorough understanding of the internal diversity of the ASP is also necessary. More thorough accounts of Solidarists' goals will allow robust statistical analysis to determine patterns of simultaneously held goals. Future investigation will also test whether membership in a caucus is correlated with greater satisfaction with the party as a whole.

Catholic voters in the United States are caught between two worlds. U.S. culture is defined by its individualism, which leads to a libertarian politics. Catholicism espouses a communitarian ethos, from which sprouts a solidarist politics. The American Solidarity Party offers novel answers to the social isolation, resulting from individualism's interaction with the present context, that underlies many societal issues. American Catholics, caught between individualism and personalism, are the pre-eminent test case of whether solidarism has a fighting chance in America. If American Catholics, who are so famously indistinguishable from other Americans in their voting patterns, can find a home in the ASP, then maybe the American Solidarity Party can find a home in the electorate.

## References

Abramowitz Alan I., and Kyle L. Saunders, Exploring the Bases of Partisanship in the American Electorate: Social Identity vs. Ideology, *Political Research Quarterly*, Vol. 59, No. 2, 2006. <https://doi.org/10.1177/106591290605900201>

Antkowiak Laura S., Levi G. Allen, and Geoffrey C. Layman, Coping with Cross-Pressures: The Seamless Garment in Catholic Political Behavior, *Advances in Political Psychology*, Vol. 42, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12796>

Best Robin E., and Steve B. Lem, Electoral Volatility, Competition and Third-party Candidacies in US Gubernatorial Elections, *Party Politics*, Vol. 17, No. 5, 2010. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354068810376181>

Bole William, "Communitarian Lite," in: *American Catholics & Civic Engagement: A Distinctive Voice*, Margaret O'Brien Steinfels (ed.), Rowman & Littlefield, Lanham, 2004.

Borghesi Massimo, *Catholic Discordance: Neoconservatism vs. the Field Hospital Church of Pope Francis*, Liturgical Press, Collegeville, 2021.

Campbell David E., Geoffrey C. Layman, John C. Green, and Nathanael G. Sumaktoyo, Putting Politics First: The Impact of Politics on American Religious and Secular Orientations, *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 62, No. 3, 2018. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12365>

Celis Karen, and Silvia Ezreel, Beyond the Usual Suspects: Non-Left, Male and Non-Feminist MPs and the Substantive Representation of Women, *Government and Opposition*, Vol. 50, No. 1, 2013. <https://doi.org/10.1017/gov.2013.42>

Cochran Clarke E., and David C. Cochran, *Catholics, Politics, & Public Policy*, Orbis, Maryknoll, 2003.

Copus Colin, Alistair Clark, Herwig Reynaert, and Kristof Steyvers, Minor Party and Independent Politics beyond the Mainstream: Fluctuating Fortunes but a Permanent Presence, *Parliamentary Affairs*, Vol. 62, No. 1, 2009.

Cremer Tobias, A Religious Vaccination? How Christian Communities React to Right-Wing Populism in Germany, France and the US, *Government and Opposition*, Vol. 58, 2023. <https://doi.org/10.1017/gov.2021.18>

D'Antonio William V., Michele Dillon, and Mary L. Gautier, *American Catholics in Transition*, Rowman & Littlefield, Lanham, 2013.

Dionne Jr., E. J., "There Is No Catholic Vote – And It's Important," in: *American Catholics and Civic Engagement*, Margaret O'Brien Steinfels (ed.), Rowman and Littlefield, Lanham, 2004.

Fee Joan L., Party Identification Among Catholics, 1972, 1973, *Ethnicity*, Vol. 3, No. 1, 1976.

Gray Mark M., Paul M. Perl, and Mary E. Bendyna, Camelot Only Comes but Once? John F. Kerry and the Catholic Vote, *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 36, No. 2, 2006. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-5705.2006.00299.x>

Guinjoan i Cesena Marc, "Set on Competing: Contamination Effects and Parties'

Entry Decisions in Mass Elections," Ph.D. diss., Universitat Pompeu Fabra, 2012.

Guth James L., "Religion and Republicans: The Presidential Election of 2012," paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, New Orleans, LA, August 30-September 2, 2012.

Jelen Ted G., "Religion and Public Opinion in the 1990s: An Empirical Overview," in: *Understanding Public Opinion*, Barbara Norrander and Clyde Wilcox (ed.), Congressional Quarterly, Washington, DC, 1997.

Kellstedt Lyman A., and James L. Guth, Catholic Partisanship and the Presidential Vote in 2012: Testing Alternative Theories, *The Forum*, Vol. 11, No. 4, 2014. <https://doi.org/10.1515/for-2014-0006>

Lee Daniel J., Third-Party Threat and the Dimensionality of Major-Party Roll Call Voting, *Public Choice*, Vol. 159, 2014. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11127-013-0066-x>

Leege David C., and Paul D. Mueller, "How Catholic is the Catholic Vote?" in: *American Catholics & Civic Engagement: A Distinctive Voice*, Margaret O'Brien Steinfels (ed.), Rowman & Littlefield, Lanham, MD, 2004.

McGraw Bryan, Europe's Christian Democratic Parties and American Possibilities, *Perspectives on Political Science*, Vol. 46, No. 1, 2017. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10457097.2016.1252596>

McGreevy John, Catholics, Democrats, and the GOP in Contemporary America, *American Quarterly*, Vol. 59, No. 3, 2007. <https://doi.org/10.1353/aq.2007.0066>

Mockabee Stephen T., "Religion and Realignment: The 'Catholic Vote' in American Elections, 1952-2002," paper prepared for the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Chicago, IL, September 2-4, 2004.

Moyn Samuel, "Personalism, Community, and the Origins of Human Rights," in: *Human Rights in the Twentieth Century*, Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann (ed.), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2011.

O'Brien Diana Z., "Righting" Conventional Wisdom: Women and Right Parties in Established Democracies, *Politics & Gender*, Vol. 14, No. 1, 2018. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X17000514>

Poggi Jeanine, "TV Ad Pricing Chart: A Show in Its 13th Season Returns to the Top 10 Most Expensive Buys," *AdAge*. Available at: <https://adage.com/article/news/tv-ad-pricing-chart/305899> (accessed February 4, 2023).

Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, "Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church," Vatican, 2004.

Prendergast William, *The Catholic Voter in American Politics*, Georgetown University Press, Washington, DC, 1999.

Ross Kerri, Susan Dodds, and Rachel A. Ankeny, A Matter of Conscience? The Democratic Significance of "Conscience Votes" in Legislating Bioethics in Australia, *Australian Journal of Social Issues*, Vol. 44, No. 2, 2009. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1839-4655.2009.tb00136.x>

Ryan John B., and Caitlin Milazzo, The South, the Suburbs, and the Vatican Too: Explaining Partisan Change Among Catholics, *Political Behavior*, Vol. 37, 2015. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-014-9300-0>

doi.org/10.1007/s11109-014-9276-2

Sammon Margaret R., "The Politics of the U.S. Catholic Bishops: The Centrality of Abortion," in: *Catholics and Politics: The Dynamic Tension between Faith and Power*, Kristin E. Heyer, Mark J. Rozell, and Michael A. Genovese (ed.), Georgetown University Press, Washington, DC, 2008.

Schuerman Ben, Third Parties and City Council Elections, *Xavier Journal of Politics*, Vol. 1, 2010.

Schwartz Thomas, Parties, *Constitutional Political Economy*, Vol. 32, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10602-021-09326-w>

Siavelis Peter, Continuity and Change in the Chilean Party System: On the Transformational Effects of Electoral Reform, *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 6, 1997. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414097030006001>

Smidt Corwin E., Catholics and the 2020 Presidential Election, *Politics and Religion Journal*, Vol. 15, No. 2, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.54561/prj1502283s>

Trahan Adam, Public Attitudes Toward Legal Abortion, Euthanasia, Suicide, and Capital Punishment: Partial Evidence of a Consistent Life Ethic, *Criminal Justice Review*, Vol. 42, No. 1, 2017. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0734016816682567>

Winger Richard, "Voter Registration Totals," *Ballot Access News*, December 27, 2022. Available at: <https://ballot-access.org/2022/12/27/december-2022-ballot-access-news-print-edition> (accessed March 28, 2023).

Yamane David, *The Catholic Church in State Politics: Negotiating Prophetic Demands & Political Realities*, Roman & Littlefield, Lanham, 2005.

Шон К. Томас

## ДОМ ЗА ПОЛИТИЧКЕ БЕСКУЋНИКЕ? АМЕРИЧКА СОЛИДАРНА ПАРТИЈА, КАТОЛИЦИ И ТРЕЋЕ ПАРТИЈЕ У АМЕРИЧКОЈ ПОЛИТИЦИ

### Сажетак

Амерички католици су у последњих неколико декада имали избор између републиканаца и демократа, две партије чије се политичке платформе битно разликују од католичког социјалног учења. Америчка солидарна партија (АСП) основана је на истим принципима као и католичко социјално учење, са посебним фокусом на достојанство људског живота, подршку за сиромашне, рањиве и угњетавање. На тај начин АСП нуди католичким, али и другим, бирачима алтернативу која може смањити њихове проблеме у односу на црквено социјално учење. Ипак, овај алтернатива је балансирана ја реалном малим шансама за тренутни изборни успех. За потребе овог рада интервјуисана су 72 члана АСП-а у циљу сазнавања зашто подржавају партију, како виду интерну партијску динамику, и чему се надају да ће партија постићи. АСП присталице посебно цене људско достојанство. Иако њихови чланови цене чињеницу да коначно имају политички дом, њихове вредности се често размоилазе. Зато су развили посебне стратегије, вероватно обликоване хришћанско-демократском идеологије, како би избегли ове несугласице и створили један уједињен фронт.

**Кључне речи:** Америчка солидарна партија, хришћанско демократске партије, америчка политика, католици, трећа партија, конзистентна животна етика