
With a clear vote, the US House of Representatives demonstrated that 'no one is above the law'. Not even the President

(from New York) "Help us, God." House Speaker Nancy Pelosi made this plea as she signed the article of impeachment against President Donald J. Trump on a count of willful incitement of violent mobs in Washington, D.C. opposing the ratification of Joe Biden's victory. A week has gone by since a mob of supporters of outgoing President Donald Trump stormed the Capitol, raided its offices and assaulted a policeman with a fire extinguisher, who later died while carrying out his duty: to protect the House of the People. That same day a Californian woman also died, killed by police while seeking to protect the chamber where the joint session was taking place, while three more people died of health issues aggravated by the assault. Father **Gary Studniewski** serves as parish priest at St Peter's Church, located south of Capitol Hill. He recalls 6 January as an ordinary day until, returning from shopping in the afternoon, he found the streets blocked off, and he knew something was wrong. During this time, he witnessed the evacuation of a building where a pipe bomb had been found. "Many residents entered the (St Peter's) church to seek safe shelter," he said, pointing out that they kept the church open and brought water to their neighbours who had come there "to shield themselves from the chaos." *Indeed, that same chaos could either disappear or, on the contrary, resurface, which is what led the House to pass a vote in favour of impeachment.* A week after that assault on the sacred symbol of American politics, *with a 232-197 vote in favour of impeachment, "the House demonstrated that no-one is above the law, not even the president of the United States."* Nancy Pelosi described Trump as a clear danger to the country, saying that the article of impeachment is heartbreaking for what it means for our country: a president inciting an insurrection. Trump will go down in history for many reasons. As of yesterday, including for becoming the first president to be impeached twice. *Ten Republican members voted with Democrats to impeach Trump,* the most prominent being Liz Cheney (Wyo), House Republican Conference Chair, the third-highest position in the House Republican leadership, daughter of Vice President Dick Cheney. Proceedings now move to the Senate, which decides whether or not to convict the President. But Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said the Senate will not reconvene until 19 January, one day before President-elect Joe Biden takes office and is sworn in as President. *Hence timing for conviction and removal from office would be tight, and for some scholars impractical, as the conclusion of the Trump era is only a few days away.* However, a number of journalists and clerics are calling for the proceedings to be continued, if only to teach the future president a lesson, so that he might be alerted should he engage in abuse. Trump's removal from the White House, by whichever means, will not mend the rifts that the march on Capitol Hill further exposed. *The departure of President Trump from Washington D.C. is unlikely to heal the country from violence and division, nor will a scapegoat be enough to fix it, for the problem is bound to resurface.* "The path towards communion begins by acknowledging what we have done and what we have failed to do. Both for the Church and for the country," said Matt Malone, columnist for America magazine. As Father Gary returned to his parish he saw many members of the House. He firmly believes that *"we have seen the tragic consequences of what happens when private individuals and a country lose their spiritual direction",* he said which is why he is calling for a greater commitment to unity and dialogue among all the churches in his parish: it is necessary to set the example.

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