

USA

Whipping at the border, Catholic Biden's welcome

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The first striking images of the latest migration crisis on the border between Mexico and the United States are those of horse-mounted officers using lassos as whips to drive masses of migrants away from the US side of the Rio Grande, on the Texan side of the border. "The usual cold-eyed Texans" one might comment. This time, however, the order to close the border came from Biden's White House, and thus from the president

who promised a sharp turnaround in immigration policy compared to Trump.

A few figures help to understand the tension at the border this week. On Wednesday, 9,000 Haitian migrants arrived in the border town of Del Rio, Texas. Last Saturday another 6,000 crossed the Rio Grande into the USA. They camped in worse than precarious hygienic conditions, with little water and food, assisted only by the goodwill of citizens and local authorities. In total, 35,000 Haitians crossed the Texan border in this way. The federal government responded to this sudden influx of immigrants by closing the border. Hence the scenes of horse-mounted officers harshly rejecting and practically 'whipping' those who still tried to cross the Rio Grande. Texan police vehicles blocked the international bridge and, further away from the cameras, three flights took the illegal immigrants back to Port au Prince, Haiti's capital.

This crisis follows just a few months after last spring, when an increasingly uncontrollable mass of migrants from Central America pressed the borders, seeking asylum. And unaccompanied children were the most visible. Under the Biden administration, as under Trump's, children have been temporarily confined in reception centres, in the 'cages' that had caused such a stir in the Trump years and are now seen as a temporary and necessary solution.

Double standards aside, the Biden administration's response to illegal immigration should pose serious questions to the Catholic minority who voted for the Catholic president, especially on the basis of his reception policy. Biden's programme, from a Catholic point of view, is in fact a long list of 'despite'. To vote for him anyway, despite his ultra-abortionist policy, despite his family policy, despite his gender and transgender 'new rights' policy, despite his laxity towards cultural institutions that want to suppress religious freedom, despite his intention to reform and expand the Supreme Court, which for the first time has a majority of Christian and conservative judges? In the end, the only difference was the policy of welcoming immigrants. However, if those who build walls cannot "call themselves Christians", what about those who whip immigrants? There is a risk of falling into the usual double standards, induced by the liberal ideology shared by the vast majority of the American media: anything goes, as long as it's from the left.

The second consideration, instead, is what might be called a more moral immigration policy. First of all, if the crisis in Haiti really is a humanitarian one, why is immigration from the island not seen as a refugee problem to be tackled? As Todd Bensman, a researcher at the Center for Immigration Studies explains to the [New York Post](#) (and as numerous field interviews now confirm): "I've never met one yet who is

actually coming directly from Haiti," he said. "But they will probably apply for asylum on the basis of [problems] in Haiti". According to the researcher, the Haitians already had their own working lives in South America, many coming from Brazil, where they had worked for the last Olympics. Then: "They say they heard that Joe Biden was opening the borders, so they came". It is clear that here too, as in the case of the NGO ships in the Mediterranean, an 'attraction factor' has come into play. It is the Biden-Harris attitude on reception, much more than the Haitian crises, that pushed these tens of thousands of people to attempt to cross the border illegally. Is this a moral and responsible way to manage immigration? Certainly not. The proof is that the Biden-Harris administration itself has to resort to closing the border to avoid a humanitarian crisis at home. You can't promise something that can't be delivered for obvious reasons of space. You can't process 35,000 asylum applications in a single week, while the number of applicants grows by thousands every day. Of course, one must demand that humane methods and instruments be used (no whips, no cages for detaining children), but one cannot demand that the borders be left open without control.

Is it moral to aspire to the utopia of a world without borders, where it is not even necessary to claim asylum, or to prove one's right to it, because anyone can move anywhere and settle anywhere they want? While freedom of movement is undeniably a right, freedom of settlement is not. Welcoming one's neighbour into one's home or country must remain a voluntary act. If it is imposed (by force, by vote, or by the sheer weight of the masses) the right of one becomes an expropriation of the other's. The left-wing intelligentsia is oriented towards this solution of 'planetary' expropriation. But faced with this prospect, in practice, even a left-wing, Catholic president draws the line. Adopting the same methods as those who were condemned for building walls.