Opinion
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by NCR Staff

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August 13, 2021
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In a commentary for NCR, Rebecca Bratten Weiss outlines how a Communion ban would misrepresent President Joe Biden's, and most Democratic-voting Catholics, position on abortion. Bratten Weiss writes that progressive Catholics are not "pro-abortion," and their fundamental disagreement with right-wing Catholics is not on whether abortion is an evil. The disagreement is how best to go about preventing it. Following are letters to the editor responding to the commentary. The letters have been edited for length and clarity.

Rebecca Bratten Weiss is correct when she attributes the best of intentions to those who hope to stop abortions by eliminating the circumstances in which women supposedly have no alternatives, but forcing the public to pay for the abortions in the meantime is to make them complicit in killing the unborn.



A bad means cannot be used to achieve a good end. Politicians who enact laws compelling the public, via taxes, to support the taking of innocent life are complicit in the act. No matter how good one's intentions, if one then proceeds to deliberately kill an individual, one has committed murder. Good intentions need to be supported not only by a correctly formed conscience but by common sense.

HANNA KLAUS

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

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In her article, Rebecca Bratten Weiss highlighted some very important points that often get lost discussing a legal ban on abortion. Namely to ban abortion does not work in the final analysis but as she said, "If your goal is to oppress and punish women … it works just fine." It points the way to thinking "out of the box" to find solutions that make sense.

My thought is this: if Catholics cared so much about the unborn, they need to provide a way out of the situation — putting their money where their mouth is. Can you imagine how powerful it would for the pro-life argument if every Catholic parish in the U.S. financially supported one woman facing a crisis pregnancy? It would not be easy nor totally eliminate abortion, but it would save lives and fulfil Jesus' words, that in helping the least of the brethren, we helped him.

Finally, I applaud Bratten Weiss who went on to state that: "the bishops who seek to deny Biden Communion are not bravely putting the sacraments … into the service of life and dignity. They are putting the sacraments into the service of the Republican Party and its policies. These policies have been remarkably ineffectual for nearly 50 years, yet apparently it is heresy for progressive Catholics to point this out, or to suggest a better, more life-affirming way of addressing the abortion problem."

Though it is not perfect, the suggestion listed above could help Catholic communities make a difference. All they have to do is just do it.

JERILYN E. FELTON

Tigard, Oregon

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The conflation of pro-choice with pro-abortion is part of the rhetorical problem which some members of the church hierarchy have adopted and which has caused a barrier to communication about this social problem. Ending abortion by fiat is a fool's errand and should be replaced by discussions on how to convince women who are facing troubled pregnancies to bring those pregnancies to term.

The Catholic Church in America could have embarked upon a program to convince women with troubled pregnancies that although they have agency the right choice is life. However, the U.S. bishops' conference decided to follow the lead of the evangelicals who saw the political advantage of arguing that women do not have agency or any right to make their own decisions.

If the bishops placed half as much rhetoric into arguing that abortion is the wrong choice, rather than posturing for their GOP friends and donors, the abortion issue would not be nearly as galvanic as it is and more women would choose life.

President Joe Biden's efforts to provide a tax credit as a cash payment to working-class families will make great strides toward addressing the principal economic issue which affects many abortion decisions.

It is time the bishops began supporting the Democratic Party, which recognizes and works toward economic justice knowing it is the central pillar to support social justice which the U.S. bishops' conference claims to champion.

CHARLES A. LE GUERN

Granger, Indiana

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I was an assistant pastor at St. John the Baptist Catholic Church in Corpus Christi, Texas. A parishioner asked if he could use our school building for local elections. He was a Democrat. He said they did not have a place for voters. I said he could.

After the election, some parishioners came to me complaining I created a scandal by having Democrats use our school to vote since Democrats "believe/support abortion." I explained that I let Democrats use our building to secure the right to vote. I would have done this for a Republican if they came to me with the same request.

There was also the time when our parish president for the local Knights of Columbus came to me and said there was a problem within their ranks. One member requested that at the evening meeting a moment of silence be held for Ted Kennedy who died. The president said he couldn't do it because Ted was a democrat who supported abortion. I answered that we would pray for Ted Kennedy because a good man died and his family needs comfort and support. We're not praying about or for his political beliefs.

Such generalizations/ judgements like this needlessly complicate and delude any issue or event. The reality of it is overshadowed by fear, anger and self-righteousness. So how can one know and act within the truth/reality when clouded by bias?

(Fr.) JOHN FORBUS

Corpus Christi, Texas

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The article by Rebecca Bratten Weiss is, in my opinion, a brilliant discussion of the legalized abortion issue and how it affects our political discourse.

Since 1973, when I was a nursing student taking my obstetric clinical rotation at a Chicago hospital, I have been searching for an argument that could explain my personal response to this issue. For years, I have been trying to explain the situation that women have found themselves in that made the decision to choose abortion an only solution, and for years have advocated more expansive healthcare and child care availability.

To phrase this directly in business language, the law of supply and demand should have an impact on capitalistic right-wing conservatives who are arguing this question in the public forum — I would hope.

MARY ANNE HINCHEY

Grand Island, Nebraska

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This article raises the question of removing the demand for abortion but does not suggest how we might do that. Having studied, researched, taught, and published on this subject over 40 years, the most obvious first step is to promote responsible parenthood. The reason why most Catholics do not bring this up is because they know that the only realistic manner of practicing responsible parenthood is by using preventive forms of contraception.

It is time for us finally to admit that the official Catholic position on contraception was inopportune, seriously flawed and certainly ineffective. Although Pope Paul VI characterized the reaction to *Humanae Vitae* as a "lively debate," his successors exaggerated their negative moral judgment of using contraception and turned it into a test of orthodoxy.

On the one hand, there is no historical precedent for Paul VI's insinuation that the "inseparable connection between the unitive and procreative meanings" of marital coitus represents the "constant teaching of the church." On the other hand, there is no moral theological argument that establishes the use of contraception to be "gravely morally evil."

I recently did an informal poll of professional Catholic moral theologians asking whether they believed it is necessary for one who uses contraception to confess this before going to communion. Of the 26 colleagues who replied, 24 said, simply "no." Two others nuanced their response by stating that using contraception involved an evil, but neither of them believed that confession was necessary before reception of the Eucharist.

JOSEPH SELLING

Brussels, Belgium

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