Opinion
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by NCR Staff

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Catholics responded with joy, anger and trepidation to the U.S. Supreme Court's June 24 decision that overturned its earlier 1973 decision in *Roe* v. *Wade* that had guaranteed a constitutional right to abortion. "As we at NCR have long argued, making abortion illegal is not the only — or even necessarily the most effective — way to bring about a reduction in the number of abortions in this country," we wrote in our editorial. Following are reader responses to our editorial that have been edited for length and clarity.

Your thoughtful editorial on the U.S. Supreme Court's decision to stop the nearly 50-year history of federally protected legal abortion in the United States states it well: "There is no doubt: Women will die without *Roe*'s protection."

The real question to consider today is not whether priests should give Communion to Catholics who are pro-choice, but rather, whether any Catholic should accept Communion from the hand of a bishop or priest who fails to speak out regularly against the continual assault and abuse of women and children in our society.

ROBERT F. LYONS

Kennebunk, Maine

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The Rev. Martin Niemöller was right — next they will come for me.

RICHARD L. CRANK

Lawrence, Kansas



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In reversing *Roe*, Supreme Court Justice Samuel Alito leaves the decision to the states. But even before his decision, even as the majority of Americans are in favor of abortion, Alito knew that 15 states were positioned to ban abortion. So the will of the people is frustrated.

And the day before, Justice Clarence Thomas strikes down a 100-year-old New York gun law that had been decided by the state legislature. The will of the people is frustrated again.

Your recent editorial is poignant but unfortunately the wheels have come off the Catholic wagon a long time ago and our political train is runaway. And we Catholics are complicit and culpable in the demise of our democracy.

BUD BRETSCHNEIDER

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

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I am against abortion. I propose that before any man, married or not, approaches a woman sexually, he take a DNA test. Pregnancy tests are readily available, let's make DNA available and have our male population take some responsibility.

JANE FRANCISCO

Charlotte, North Carolina

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Now is the time for moderates in the pro-choice movement, whose moderate pro-choice position is shared by the majority of the U.S. population, to separate themselves from pro-choice extremists and create a movement in support of moral, legal protections for elective abortions up to 20 weeks.

That should have happened decades ago, but moderates have long allowed their voices to be drowned out by money grubbing extremists who condemn sane limits on access to elective abortions as evil. The result are the six-week bans and the other radical abortion bans that threaten every state where the conservative right holds a majority in the state legislature.

JEFFREY JONES

Hamburg, New York

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I completely agree with the ideas behind your editorial that pro-life Catholics need to step up and address the causes and conditions which bring about unwanted pregnancies. They need to become champions of the policies and programs which can assist women in those circumstances. Additionally, they can no longer have the luxury of thinking abortion is the only pro-life issue when there are myriad problems in this country which likewise fall under the same umbrella.

The rightwing of the U.S. bishops' conference has been receiving all the attention these past years mostly for their one-issue campaign against abortion. They ignored the malignancies of the Trump administration, and the chief perpetrator of much of our divisions, ostensibly because Donald Trump claimed to be "pro-life." His actions for the entirety of his four years in office gives the lie to that posturing. The justices he appointed were selected principally because of their favorable leanings toward business and their anti-big government philosophy. I doubt those who selected them seriously felt they would actually overturn a galvanic issue which was the source of so much funding and political energy.

Like the proverbial dog that caught the car he was chasing they must think about what to do next. I have no doubt the culture wars will continue and the focus on those in the pews will become a question of their fealty to other church teachings which will become equally, if not more, divisive. Too many clerics want to define membership in the church by political boundaries making the church just another political party.

CHARLES A. LE GUERN

Granger, Indiana

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The editorial misses the mark for many reasons, the first being incorrect use of words. Rather than a "pro-life" movement it has solely been a "pro-birth" movement. Sadly, NCR's editorial staff would have better served their readers by correctly naming and addressing the movement for what it was. Was, because it has now ended with a victory for pro-birthers.

The U.S. Roman Catholic Church has never been and never will be pro-life in the true sense of the word nor will the U.S. bishops ever switch parties. The abortion battle has been won by lying Catholics. Catholic Supreme Court Justices Brett Kavanaugh and Amy Coney Barrett showed their true colors during their hearings. For them, the end justifies the means. This behavior will not be challenged by the US bishops because their cause was served as well. though should be denounced if they were true moral theologians.

The U.S. bishops, some of whom are culture warriors until their dying breath, taste blood in the water. Being invigorated by a victory they seek their next. Catholic Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas has named it for them — complete elimination of birth control, sex education at all levels of public schools, and no mention of gender identity. The other is reversal of same-sex marriages and right for all LGBTQ Americans. That is a checklist made in heaven for U.S. bishops and Christian Nationalists seeking a Dominionistic government.

MICHAEL J. MCDERMOTT

Tyler, Texas

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The five justices, supposedly "pro-life," who voted to overturn *Roe* are those who at the same time voted to permit people to carry guns in public — in spite of the frequent mass slaughters by guns. Three of the five lied at their nomination hearings in recent years, promising never to overturn *Roe* because "it was settled law."

Our most conservative U.S. bishops, for whom the only sin worth denouncing is abortion, are those most strongly opposed to any role in the church where the voice of women can be heard; likewise they have little concern for the many public policies that affect women and children, such as health care, education and gun control. Their prohibition of contraception alone reveals how removed from reality and actual women they are.

They are also the same leaders who not only failed to denounce clergy abuse of children for many decades, but helped conceal it. That women are disgusted with hypocritical politicians and bishops whose main goal is control of women is an understatement. These actions will lead to further distancing of women from phony politicians and the church which has yet to recognize their value and voice — by voting with their feet, ballots and intellect.

JEAN R. REDMOND

San Jose, Costa Rica

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As a loyal and churchgoing Catholic who is pro-choice, I felt alone and disdained by the hierarchy and religious community. Fortunately, I found Catholics for Choice, which is a group I respect and

admire.

Please let others know that there are many "loyal" Catholics who do not agree with the overturning of *Roe* v. *Wade* and understand the difficult choice women sometimes have to make. The church and clerics have little understanding of a mother with three other children who learns her unborn child will be seriously challenged. A college student who makes a mistake and does not want to become a mom at this early age.

Many Catholics, as the polls suggest, agree with me but few of us with this view are affirmed. This is why I embrace Catholics for Choice who understand the complexity of this choice.

SANDRA Y. RUEB

Old Lyme, Connecticut

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Five Catholic Supreme Court Justices chose to make their own ethical and religious convictions with regard to abortion legally binding under penalty of law on other Americans holding different ethical and religious convictions.

These same justices sided with bakers who refused to bake a wedding cake for a lesbian couple on the grounds that such an imposition of anti-discriminatory law would be an infringement of the bakers' religious liberty.

Talk about having your cake and eating it.

TIM MANNELLO

Williamsport, Pennsylvania

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With the recent ruling by Catholic SCOTUS justices in the *Dobbs* case, any residual moral authority that the church still enjoyed in our country after the revelations about clerical sexual abuse and cover-ups is gone.

Comments about opportunities for leaving the abortion debate behind and bringing people together in pursuit of a broader "pro-life" agenda are naive.

Democrats will be looking for ways to protect a woman's right to choose. It's not the role of the state to make that choice.

It's our job to make a persuasive case for choosing life to other Catholics and to all of our neighbors. In particular, it's the job of our clergy, though they aren't very good at it.

The Republican Party of Donald Trump and Ron DeSantis will not of course be pursuing a broader pro-life agenda. And neither will our bishops. That's not what their major donors pay them to do.

The *Dobbs* decision won't put an end to abortion but it will aggravate political and social divisions among Americans, including among American Catholics. That was the idea.

HENRY KELLEY

Arlington, Virginia

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If Catholics sincerely want to prevent abortions, they will focus on prevention instead of punishment. In six years, between 2008 to 2014, abortions decreased 25% among women. Among teenagers, abortion rates dropped almost by half.

Why? Access to birth control. The most effective means of lowering the rate of abortions — what pro-lifers like to call "killing babies" — is to increase access to contraception.

Fifty years ago, Pope Paul VI banned contraception against the advice of a papal commission studying its morality. A majority of moral theologians assembled then, and a consensus since then, argue that Scripture and tradition do not prohibit contraception.

Most American and western European Catholics rejected, then ignored, the official ban. It seemed to violate common sense as well as failing to win endorsement by moral theologians. If it's OK to use artificial means to prolong human life, why not the means to prevent its conception?

Today, Catholic women have as many abortions as other American women. The ill-conceived ban sowed doubt over the church's authority in other matters.

If church officials had the courage to change their official stance against contraception, the number of abortions might decrease. But change is oh so difficult! Admitting that the official church made a mistake even more so.

JEANETTE BLONIGEN CLANCY

Avon, Minnesota

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