



THE DIOCESE OF ROCKVILLE CENTRE

Office of Human Life, Family and Bioethics



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August 2022

Dear Friends for Life,

“Remember this and never forget it: Even if it should seem at times that everything is collapsing, nothing is collapsing at all, because God doesn’t lose battles.”

~ St. Josemaria Escriva

PUBLIC POLICY UPDATE

Since the *Dobbs v. Jackson* decision was announced, overturning *Roe v. Wade*, it seems there has been an unrelenting onslaught against life, morals and conscience – a veritable dismantling of all that holds what is right and proper. A short list highlighting some of these new, revised or proposed rules, regulations, legislation, etc. (and focusing only on the federal level) includes:

- On July 8, 2022, President Biden signed the **Executive Order on Protecting Access to Reproductive Healthcare Services**. This order protects and promotes access to abortion and contraception, encourages pro bono legal assistance for those seeking or providing abortions, and will increase security measures for clinics, pharmacies and other entities involved with abortion-related procedures and medications, among other things.¹
- In a letter to health care providers on July 11, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, Xavier Becerra, directed that enforcement of the **Emergency Medical Treatment and Active Labor Act (EMTALA)** would pre-empt state laws that ban abortion, if a physician determined that a direct abortion would stabilize a patient presenting to an Emergency Department. This re-interpretation of EMTALA explicitly does not limit the definition of emergency medical conditions to which this would apply and implies that abortion is a routine solution to pregnancy complications—one that

¹ [Executive Order on Protecting Access to Reproductive Healthcare Services - The White House](#)

sees a singular patient, not two (that is, mother and child). Violations could result in loss of Medicare contracts and other monetary penalties.²

- On July 13, the Office of Civil Rights in the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) issued “**guidance**” to **U.S. pharmacies** indicating strong repercussions for actions construed to discriminate based on sex and/or disability such as advising about or not supplying a particular drug known (and intended) to cause direct abortion. Of note in the text, there is a deliberate effort to conflate miscarriage with direct abortion activities and to combine approved and unapproved medication uses, as well as an unusual emphasis on the autonomy of the prescriber and obligation of the pharmacy to fill a prescription—even one that might violate the conscience of the pharmacist (a most ironic position after opposite policies were enforced for specific prescribed treatments during the pandemic).³
- On July 15, the **Women’s Health Protection Act of 2022** (H.R. 8296) passed the House for the second time (a similar bill was passed in September 2021). This bill codifies abortion in federal law, allowing abortion on demand through the entire nine months of pregnancy and eliminates reasonable safeguards such as waiting periods, parental notifications, health and safety requirements for a facility performing abortions, etc. It would likely invalidate conscience protections for health care providers, employers and insurers as well.⁴
- On July 19, **The Respect for Marriage Act** (H.R. 8404) was passed by the House of Representatives. This bill seeks to repeal the Defense of Marriage Act and codify same-sex (or any definition—including polygamy—of) marriage in federal law. Traditional marriage recognizes the sexual complementarity of husband and wife and upholds the right of children to a mother and father in the normal course of things. If enacted, this law would upend those normative relationships and would threaten the conscience and religious freedom of individuals, businesses and faith-based service providers (e.g. adoption agencies) which adhere to traditional values.⁵
- On July 21, **The Right to Contraception Act** (H.R. 8373) was passed by the House of Representatives. This bill would promote access to contraception and strip conscience protections. Justification for the bill is predicated on contestable claims that contraception is “safe,” “essential health care,” and necessary to participate “equally in economic and social life.”⁶
- On July 25, HHS announced a **proposed rule** that would undermine conscience protections for health care organizations. Based on **Section 1557** of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act which prohibits discrimination in health care, this rule boasts particular attention to gender

² [Following President Biden’s Executive Order to Protect Access to Reproductive Health Care, HHS Announces Guidance to Clarify that Emergency Medical Care Includes Abortion Services | HHS.gov](#)

[HHS Secretary Letter to Health Care Providers About Emergency Medical Care](#)

³ [Guidance to Nation’s Retail Pharmacies: Obligations under Federal Civil Rights Laws to Ensure Access to Comprehensive Reproductive Health Care Services \(hhs.gov\)](#)

[Misoprostol \(marketed as Cytotec\) Information | FDA](#) (misoprostol is not FDA approved for chemical abortion)

[Texas Hospital Suspends Doctor’s Privileges After She Voices Concerns Over Vaccine Mandates \(theepochtimes.com\)](#)

⁴ [Department of Education \(usccb.org\)](#)

⁵ [Bill Text: US HB8404 | 2021-2022 | 117th Congress | Introduced | LegiScan](#)

[LetterSenateRFMA.pdf \(usccb.org\)](#)

[LetterRTC-RFMAacts2022.pdf \(usccb.org\)](#)

⁶ [Untitled \(house.gov\)](#)

[LetterRTC-RFMAacts2022.pdf \(usccb.org\)](#)

Chris Kahlenborn, *Breast Cancer: Its Link to Abortion and the Birth Control Pill*. (Dayton, OH: One More Soul, 2000).

[24046 COVER Collett NEW FINAL.pdf \(filesusr.com\)](#) (amicus brief by Collett, Alvare and Bachiochi dispelling the notion that abortion is necessary for a woman to thrive professionally, but similar arguments can be extended to the equally disingenuous claim that contraception is essential to thriving)

ideology and reproductive health. Such a rule could force entities receiving federal funding through CMS and other programs to participate in activities they hold to be morally objectionable (e.g. gender reassignment surgery, abortion, etc.). On the grounds of so-called gender and health equity, physicians could be forced to provide interventions in violation of their consciences or lose federal funding.⁷

- On August 3, 2022, President Biden signed the **Executive Order on Securing Access to Reproductive and Other Healthcare Services**. This more broadly advanced measures set forth in the July Executive Order and would expand access to abortion including the use of Medicaid funds for women to cross state lines to access abortion-related interventions.⁸ (Note that this could violate the Hyde amendment which prohibits the use of federal monies for abortion.)

Collapse of the moral order seems almost too tame a description for these recent actions!

ARE WE BLAMELESS?

We know, for instance, that procured abortion is an intrinsic evil because it is the direct and intentional taking of an innocent human life. It cannot be justified by any law or reason since it is contrary to the Natural Law, written on every human heart and knowable without special instruction.⁹ It is a grave sin to perform, procure, promote or set up societal structures to facilitate it. However, when we look at the list of actions above, it may be falsely comforting to hold responsible only elected (and appointed) officials who have signed, sponsored, voted for or otherwise supported any of these rules, bills, etc. listed.

Is it enough that *they* did it? I commit actual sin through willing opposition to God's law by way of thought, word, action or omission.¹⁰ But I might not consider the ways in which I can be an accessory to someone else's sin: by counsel, command, consent, provocation, praise or flattery, concealment, partaking, silence, and defense of the ill done.¹¹ Did *they* do it *without my help* (unwitting or unrecognized)?

For example, have I....underplayed the significance of these measures of the last month or overplayed the futility of my influence? Failed to "take action" to voice opposition when given the opportunity? Supported candidates for elected office *because* they promote the abortion agenda? Posted content favorable to abortion or other morally offensive organizations on social media or other networking avenues? Donated or participated in fundraising efforts for groups that perform or promote abortion? Attended a "Pride" parade or same-sex so-called marriage ceremony? Consented to a youth's pronouns preferences? The list is infinite.

We all fall short in some way—sometimes in big ways, on a bigger platform, with more eyes watching (and hence more responsibility to be a good example). It is our responsibility to understand how we offend God, even if the mainstream sensibility tells us something different. But while we fail to be perfect, we are never far from forgiveness and attaining salvation; it starts with humble acknowledgement, then sacramental confession, and genuine conversion.

⁷ [HHS Announces Proposed Rule to Strengthen Nondiscrimination in Health Care | HHS.gov](https://www.hhs.gov/announces-proposed-rule-to-strengthen-nondiscrimination-in-health-care.html)

⁸ [Executive Order on Securing Access to Reproductive and Other Healthcare Services - The White House](https://www.whitehouse.gov/administrative-issues/protecting-reproductive-healthcare/)

[Archbishop Decrees President Biden Executive Order, 'Continued Promotion of Abortion' | Catholic New York \(cny.org\)](https://catholicnewyork.org/archbishop-decreses-president-biden-executive-order-continued-promotion-abortion/)

⁹ John Paul II, Encyclical on The Gospel of Life *Evangelium Vitae* (March 25, 1995) §62. https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25031995_evangelium-vitae.html.

¹⁰ Catholic Church. United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 1853.

¹¹ *Roman Catholic Daily Missal*, Kansas City, Missouri, Angelus Press, 1962, p. 27.

EUCARISTIC REVIVAL

We began this newsletter with St. Josemaria Escriva's words that "God doesn't lose battles." And so, in these ever-darkening times, we ought to turn to Him. In this, there could not be a better time for Eucharistic Revival which is a national movement within the Catholic Church in the United States to restore understanding and devotion for the Real Presence, the source and summit of our Catholic Faith. You can read more here: [National Eucharistic Revival: A Grassroots Response to God's Invitation](#)

In *The Mystery of the Eucharist in the Life of the Church*, it is worth noting (especially in these trying times) that the Bishops of the United States underscore the "powerful medicine and nourishment for the weak" that the Eucharist is for those who are in a state of sanctifying grace which is an *invisible* communion with God (invisible in that only the individual can know it). The reception of Holy Communion entails a *visible* dimension of communion with the Church (visible in that everyone sees it). To be worthy to receive the Most Blessed Sacrament, one must be in full communion both visibly and invisibly—anything other is incoherent.¹²

In this, if one willingly rejects Church doctrine or teaching on moral issues, "such a situation would not accord with the nature of the Eucharistic celebration, so that he or she should refrain." In most cases (except for egregious public rejection of Catholic teaching), judging one's state of grace can only be done by the individual—and if there is mortal sin (separating one from friendship with God), the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation is the only remedy before presenting oneself for Holy Communion. If we truly believe that the Eucharist is the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, voluntary abstinence is not only necessary and sweet, but also the motivation to restore our souls to full communion with Him.¹³

*O Sacrament most Holy,
O Sacrament Divine,
All praise and all thanksgiving,
Be every moment Thine!*

Please check out Blessed Carlo's compilation of Eucharistic Miracles [here](#).

PRAY WITHOUT CEASING

Next week we celebrate the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary into Heaven, with the octave culminating in the Feast of Mary's Queenship of Heaven and Earth. We are reminded by her most beautiful example, as the first tabernacle and guardian of the Word Made Flesh, that we must keep Heaven as our goal, so that upon our deaths we may be counted worthy to join her in that glory.¹⁴

Finally, Venerable Pope Pius XII so eloquently expresses here in this prayer to Our Lady of the Assumption the connection between the themes of this newsletter—tying together our anguish in the "collapse" of the things around us, our inspiration by her example, our consolation in her intercession, and our hope for the mercy of God. Remember, God doesn't lose battles.

¹² "The Mystery of the Eucharist in the Life of the Church." Accessed August 10, 2022. <https://www.usccb.org/resources/7-703%20The%20Mystery%20of%20Eucharist,%20for%20RE-UPLOAD,%20JANUARY%202022.pdf>. §45-50

¹³ "The Mystery of the Eucharist in the Life of the Church." Accessed August 10, 2022. <https://www.usccb.org/resources/7-703%20The%20Mystery%20of%20Eucharist,%20for%20RE-UPLOAD,%20JANUARY%202022.pdf>.

¹⁴ *Roman Missal* p. 1361 (collect for August 15)

Prayer to Our Lady of the Assumption by Pope Pius XII¹⁵

O Immaculate Virgin, Mother of God and Mother of Humanity, we believe with all the fervor of our faith in your triumphal Assumption both in body and in soul into heaven where you are acclaimed as Queen by all the choirs of angels and all the legions of saints; we unite with them to praise and bless the Lord who has exalted you above all other pure creatures and to offer you the tribute of our devotion and our love.

We know that your gaze, which on earth watched over the humble and suffering humanity of Jesus, in heaven is filled with the vision of that humanity glorified and with the vision of uncreated Wisdom, and that the joy of your soul in the direct contemplation of the adorable Trinity causes your heart to throb with overwhelming tenderness; and we, poor sinners whose bodies weigh down the flight of the soul, beg you to purify our hearts so that, while we remain below, we may learn to see God and God alone in the beauties of his creatures.

We trust that your merciful eyes may deign to gaze down upon our miseries and anguish, upon our struggles and our weaknesses; that your countenance may smile upon our joys and our victories; that you may hear the voice of Jesus saying to you of each one of us, as he once said to you of his Beloved Disciple: "Behold your son," and we who call upon you as our Mother, we, like John, take you as the guide, strength and consolation of our mortal life.

We are inspired by the certainty that your eyes, which wept over the earth crimsoned by the blood of Jesus, are yet turned toward this world racked by wars and persecutions, the oppression of the just and the weak. From the shadows of this vale of tears, we seek in your heavenly assistance, tender mercy, comfort for our aching hearts, and help in the trials of Church and country.

We believe finally that in the glory where you reign, clothed with the sun and crowned with stars, you are, after Jesus, the joy and gladness of all the angels and the saints, and from this earth, over which we tread as pilgrims, comforted by our faith in the future resurrection, we look to you our life, our sweetness, our hope; draw us onward with the sweetness of your voice, so that one day, after our exile, you may show us Jesus, the blessed fruit of your womb. O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary.

Amen.

Consider joining us for the Rosary for Life on Fridays at 3:00 p.m.

Sincerely in Christ,



Lisa A. Honkanen, M.D.

¹⁵ [A Pope's Little-Known Prayer to Our Lady of the Assumption Every Catholic Should Know - \(churchpop.com\)](https://www.churchpop.com/2018/08/15/a-popes-little-known-prayer-to-our-lady-of-the-assumption-every-catholic-should-know/)