

Statement of Principles

June 18, 2021

As Catholic Democrats in Congress, we are proud to be part of the living Catholic tradition – a tradition that unfailingly promotes the common good, expresses a consistent moral framework for life, and highlights the need to provide a collective safety net to those individuals in society who are the most vulnerable. As legislators in the U.S. House of Representatives, we work every day to advance respect for life and the dignity of every human being. We believe that government has moral purpose.

We are committed to making real the basic principles that are at the heart of Catholic social teaching: helping the poor, disadvantaged, and the oppressed, protecting the least among us and ensuring that all Americans of every faith are given meaningful opportunities to share in the blessings of this great country. That commitment is fulfilled in different ways by legislators but includes: reducing the rising rates of poverty, particularly child poverty; increasing access to education for all; pressing for access to universal health care; recognizing the dignity of all humans; and repairing long-standing racial and gender inequities in our society. Each of these issues challenges our obligations as Catholics to community and helping those in need.

We envision a world in which every child belongs to a loving family and agree with the Catholic Church about the value of human life. Each of us is committed to reducing the number of unintended pregnancies and creating an environment with policies that encourage pregnancies to be carried to term and provide resources to raise healthy and secure children. We believe this includes promoting alternatives to abortion, such as adoption, improving access to children's healthcare and child care, and creating a child benefit through the expanded and improved Child Tax Credit.

In all these issues, we seek the Church's guidance and assistance but believe also in the primacy of conscience. In recognizing the Church's role in providing moral leadership, we acknowledge and accept the tension that comes with being in disagreement with the Church in some areas. We recognize that no political party is perfectly in accord with all aspects of Church doctrine. This fact speaks to the secular nature of American democracy, not the devotion of our democratically elected leaders. Yet we believe we can speak to the fundamental issues that unite us as Catholics and lend our voices to changing the political debate – a debate that often fails to reflect and encompass the depth and complexity of these issues.

We also urge the Church to heed the words of Our Holy Father Pope Francis, who wrote in his Apostolic Exhortation, “The Joy of the Gospel,” that the Eucharist although it is the fullness of sacramental life, is not a prize for the perfect but a powerful medicine and nourishment for the weak.” Further, the Holy Father extolls that clergy must act as facilitators of grace, not arbiters, because “the Church is not a tollhouse; it is the house of the Father, where there is a place for everyone, with all their problems.” As legislators, we too are charged with being facilitators of the Constitution which guarantees religious freedom for all Americans. In doing so, we guarantee our right to live our own lives as Catholics but also foster an America with a rich diversity of faiths.

We believe the separation of church and state allows for our faith to inform our public duties and best serve our constituents. The Sacrament of Holy Communion is central to the life of practicing Catholics, and the weaponization of the Eucharist to Democratic lawmakers for their support of a woman's safe and legal access to abortion is contradictory. No elected officials have been threatened with being denied the Eucharist as they support and have supported policies contrary to the Church teachings, including supporting the death penalty, separating migrant children from their parents, denying asylum to those seeking safety in the United States, limiting assistance for the hungry and food insecure, and denying rights and dignity to immigrants.

We solemnly urge you to not move forward and deny this most holy of all sacraments, the source and the summit of the whole work of the gospel over one issue. We remind you that the Second Vatican Council renewed emphasis on the Eucharist as the central focus, especially in the Council's Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy: "For the liturgy, 'through which the work of our redemption is accomplished,' most of all in the divine sacrifice of the Eucharist, is the outstanding means whereby the faithful may express in their lives, and manifest to others, the mystery of Christ and the real nature of the true Church." To pursue a blanket denial of the Holy Eucharist to certain elected officials would indeed grieve the Holy Spirit and deny the evolution of that individual, a Christian person who is never perfect, but living in the struggle to get there.

As Catholic Democrats who embrace the vocation and mission of the laity as expressed by the late Pope John Paul II in his Apostolic Exhortation, *Christifideles Laici*, we believe that the Church is the "people of God," called to be a moral force in the broadest sense. We believe the Church as a community is called to be in the vanguard of creating a more just America and world. And as such, we have a claim on the Church's bearing as it does on ours.

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