

## NATION+WORLD

## SF archbishop: No Communion for Pelosi over abortion stand

By Julie Asher  
Catholic News Service

San Francisco's archbishop declared May 20 that House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., is not "to be admitted" to Communion unless and until she publicly repudiates "support for abortion 'rights'" and goes to confession and receives absolution "for her cooperation in this evil."

Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone said he decided to make this declaration "after numerous attempts to speak with her to help her understand the grave evil she is perpetrating, the scandal she is causing and the danger to her own soul she is risking" as a Catholic who supports legalized abortion.

Pelosi represents California's 12th Congressional District, which is entirely within San Francisco. A call to Pelosi's Washington office from Catholic News Service to request a comment was not returned immediately.

"Please know that I find no pleasure whatsoever in fulfilling my pastoral duty here," Archbishop Cordileone said. "Speaker Pelosi remains our sister in Christ. Her advocacy for the care of the poor and vulnerable elicits my admiration. I assure you that my action here is purely pastoral, not political. I have been very clear in my words and actions about this."

The archbishop opened a 1,300-word "letter to the faithful" by saying that Pope Francis "has been one of the world's most vocal advocates of human dignity in every stage and condition of life."

"He decries what he evocatively calls the 'throwaway culture,'" Archbishop Cordileone said. "There can be no more extreme example of this cultural depravity than when direct attacks on human life are enshrined in a nation's law, celebrated by society, and even paid for by the government. This is why Pope Francis, as much as any pope in living memory, has repeatedly and vividly affirmed the Church's clear and constant teaching that abortion is a grave moral evil," he said.

Archbishop Cordileone said he is bound by canon law to be "concerned for all the Christian faithful entrusted" to his care. He added that over the years he has heard from many Catholics "expressing distress over the scandal being caused by such Catholics in public life who promote such grievously evil practices as abortion."

In September, Archbishop Cordileone asked Catholics in the San Francisco archdiocese to pray for Pelosi on abortion. What prompted the call for prayer was her leadership on the Women's Health Protection Act, or H.R. 3755, passed by the House in a 218-211 vote Sept. 24.

The measure establishes the legal right to abortion on demand at any stage of pregnancy in all 50 states under federal law. The bill was pushed forward over fears by abortion supporters the Supreme Court will overturn *Roe v. Wade* in its decision on a Mississippi ban on abortion after 15 weeks. The measure failed to advance to a full vote in the Senate May 11.

Pelosi considers abortion health care and, as recently

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KEVIN LAMARQUE, REUTERS | CNS

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., speaks during a news conference on Capitol Hill in Washington Sept. 24, 2021, about the Women's Health Protection Act, which aims to establish a legal right to abortion in all 50 states under federal law.

as May 13 in remarks on the steps of the U.S. Capitol, she warned the Supreme Court to keep its "hands off women's reproductive health care." Pelosi's position on abortion "has become only more extreme over the years, especially in the last few months," Archbishop Cordileone said. "Just earlier this month she once again, as she has many times before, explicitly cited her Catholic faith while justifying abortion as a 'choice,' this time setting herself in direct opposition to Pope Francis."

"Conversion is always better than exclusion, and before any such action can be taken it must be preceded by sincere and diligent efforts at dialogue and persuasion," Archbishop Cordileone wrote. If the person in question still presents himself or herself to receive the Eucharist, "the minister of holy Communion must refuse to distribute it," he said, quoting canon law.

Aboard the papal flight from Slovakia Sept. 15, Pope Francis said he did not want to comment directly on the issue of denying Communion in the United States "because I do not know the details."

However, he said that while there is no question that "abortion is homicide," bishops must take a pastoral approach rather than wade into the political sphere.

"If we look at the history of the Church, we can see that every time the bishops did not act like shepherds when dealing with a problem, they aligned themselves with political life, on political problems," he said.

He also said he never denied Communion to anyone, but he was "never aware of anyone in front of me under those conditions that you mentioned."

Recalling his apostolic exhortation, "Evangelii Gaudium," the pope said that "Communion is not a prize for the perfect," but rather "a gift, the presence of Jesus in his Church and in the community. That is the theology." However, Pope Francis also said he understood why the Church takes a hard stance because accepting abortion "is a bit as if daily murder was accepted."

OVER

## ABORTION POLLING

How to make sense of Americans' attitudes toward abortion? It isn't easy. In polls, many respondents will give answers that contradict each other.

A Gallup poll in 2019 — Gallup has polled regularly on abortion since 1975 — found that 92% of Americans believed that using birth control was “morally acceptable,” but their support for abortion, by contrast, was more mixed. (The Catholic Church teaches that both are morally wrong.)

But the year before, Gallup found that 65% of Americans believed abortion should generally be illegal during the second trimester of pregnancy — but in the same survey, 69% said the Supreme Court should not overturn *Roe v. Wade*.

FiveThirtyEight, which itself analyzed abortion polls, “found that a large majority of Americans support abortion in the first trimester, but that support tends to drop in the second trimester.”

In an ABC News-Washington Post poll conducted in late April, 54% of Americans want the court to uphold *Roe*, nearly twice as many as the 28% who want to see it struck down. Also, an ABC poll offering only a yes-or-no choice found that 57% of Americans opposed a ban on abortion after 15 weeks of pregnancy, while 58% opposed a ban after six weeks.

Pew has been polling regularly about abortion since 1995. Pew has found that whenever certain statements about abortion used in its polling also describe the respondent's views as well, they've been offered the same seeming contradictions.

Results of Pew's latest polling on abortion, issued May 6, show a starker partisan divide than had existed in the past.

Since 2007, Republicans who say abortion should be legal in all or most cases went up from 37% to 39%. Among Democrats, the percentages went up from 63% in 2007 to 80% in 2022. In 2012, the percentages of Americans either for or against abortion came together the closest they'd been, but support for legal abortion has never fallen below 50%.

Younger Republicans, including 47% of those ages 18-29, said abortion should be legal in most or all cases. Among all Americans, though, the older the respondent, the less likely they are to agree with that view — although majorities supporting a “right to abortion” extends through the oldest age group.

And through it all, Gallup has found that support for legal abortion, after nearly 50 years of polling, has gone up all of 1%, and opposition is down by the same 1%.

— Mark Pattison, CNS