



Office of the Bishop
PHONE: (702) 735-9605
FAX: (702) 735-8941

Bishop George Leo Thomas' Response to *Las Vegas Sun* Guest Column by Susie Lee, "Senate must codify abortion rights now"

On May 15, 2018, I preached my first homily as the new Bishop for the Diocese of Las Vegas, setting out a blueprint for the Catholic Church here in southern Nevada.

In that inaugural homily, I articulated the Catholic Church's deepest conviction that all life is sacred, from the moment of conception until natural death. In a word, we believe that all persons, without exception, are unique and unrepeatable gifts from God. We hold that each is fashioned in God's own image, and therefore, there are to be no throwaway people, no disposable souls, and no second-class citizens.

This conviction explains the Catholic Church's reverence for unborn life, our care for the hungry and homeless, our investment in comprehensive adoption services, our support for lawful immigration reform, and our advocacy among the poor and vulnerable in the community.

In that homily, I stated clearly, "We are a Church that will never remain silent when human life is threatened, whether in the womb or on the deathbed." We will always assert a "preferential option for the poor" as we apportion our resources and energy. I hold that the unborn child must be counted among the most vulnerable in our midst.

In her guest column printed in the *Las Vegas Sun*, January 24, 2022, Representative Susie Lee, a self-identified Catholic, articulated a position that stands in stark contrast to the hallowed moral teaching of the Catholic Church. Yet she claimed "to have a deep understanding of the moral dilemma that the choice to have an abortion presents." Her "deep understanding" is highly flawed.

As a Catholic politician, Lee is not alone in her selective and truncated understanding of the Church's moral and social teaching.

Lee wrote, "I will always be a fierce advocate in the fight to ensure that women have the freedom to seek unrestrained and medically accurate advice from their doctors and make their own decisions about their health and their bodies. Protecting the right to safe, legal abortion will be an uphill battle, but I will never back down."

Throughout her guest column, Lee proffers her support for unrestricted reproductive care, without ever mentioning the consequences of her advocacy for the unborn child, over 60 million of whom have been annihilated in the womb since the enactment of *Roe vs. Wade*, 49 years ago.

This past November, the Bishops of the United States produced a statement entitled "The Mystery of the Eucharist in the Life of the Church."

Today the Supreme Court's much-anticipated decision regarding the constitutional right to abortion stands as a teachable moment for all of us, and most notably for Catholic pro-choice politicians.

The Bishops wrote that "the Eucharist is the sacrament of the ecclesial communion, as it both signifies and effects most fully the communion with Christ that began in Baptism." (48)

It is my sincere hope that Catholic politicians and Catholics at large take this moment to look deeply into their own hearts, and reexamine the Church's moral conviction on the inviolability and dignity of human life.

If a politician from the Diocese of Las Vegas finds himself or herself at odds with the Church's teaching on the sacredness of human life, I ask him or her voluntarily to refrain from the reception of Holy Communion while holding public office.

I place the onus of that decision upon the individual politician's shoulders, and not on the backs of Pastors or Eucharistic Ministers.

The Bishops' statement is clear and compelling:

If a Catholic in his or her personal or professional life were knowingly and obstinately to reject the defined doctrines of the Church, or knowingly and obstinately to repudiate her definitive teaching on moral issues, however, he or she would seriously diminish his or her communion with the Church.

Reception of Holy Communion in such a situation would not accord with the nature of the Eucharistic celebration, so that he or she should refrain.

Susie Lee's guest column provides the catalyst for me to articulate the Church's teaching on the sacredness of human life and our position regarding politicians and the reception of Holy Communion.

At the same time, I am ever in the ready to discuss this matter privately with Representative Lee or with any Catholic politician to whom this position applies.

Please be certain of my prayers for all who hold public office during these tumultuous and challenging times.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Most Reverend George Leo Thomas, Ph.D.
Bishop of Las Vegas

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