

Deny Eucharist to pro-abortion congressmen

Archbishop O'Brien's article (CR, Nov. 13) on the Freedom of Choice Act (FOCA) proposal prompted me to consider contacting the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops to recommend excommunicating any Catholic member of the U.S. Congress who votes for FOCA. After discussing the idea with two priest friends, I rethought the idea.

First, the FOCA the archbishop described no longer exists. It didn't pass and no longer exists. The issue would again arise if a FOCA successor is introduced. Second, there is a jurisdictional requirement in the imposition of excommunication. The authority is vested with the bishop within whose jurisdiction the potential recipient resides. Third, church law doesn't permit blanketing persons into guilt related to abortion simply because they are a party to passing a law. Fourth, restricting access to the Eucharist is probably a more appropriate action. However, it represents denial of a right available to all Catholics. The proper procedure would be for a bishop to invite an individual for a discussion before imposing a denial.

Bishops must provide due process to Catholics appearing to publicly demonstrate a lack of fidelity to church teachings. My revised proposal is that the bishops' conference publicly encourage each bishop to consider denial of access to the Eucharist after due consultation with Catholic members of Congress that publicly support, or vote for, a FOCA successor.