

San Francisco archbishop invites Pelosi to discuss abortion

Dan Morris-Young | Sep. 5, 2008



SAN FRANCISCO -- Calling recent nationally broadcast comments by U.S.

Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi "in serious conflict with the teachings of the Catholic church," Archbishop George H. Niederauer of San Francisco in a Sept. 5 statement underscored church teaching on abortion, the beginning of human life, and the formation of conscience -- and invited the Catholic lawmaker "into a conversation with me about these matters."

The statement was carried in the Sept. 5 issue of *Catholic San Francisco*, newspaper of the archdiocese.

Many Catholics "have written me letters and sent me e-mails in which they expressed their dismay and concern about the Speaker's remarks," the archbishop said, adding, "Very often they moved on to a question that caused much discussion during the 2004 campaign: Is it necessary to deny Holy Communion to some Catholics in public life because of their public support for abortion on demand?"

"The practice of the church is to accept the conscientious self-appraisal of each person" when he or she approaches for Communion, he wrote, alluding to Canon 912. He also quoted the U.S. bishops' 2006 document, "Happy Are Those Who Are Called to His Supper": "we should be cautious when making judgments about whether or not someone else should receive Holy Communion."

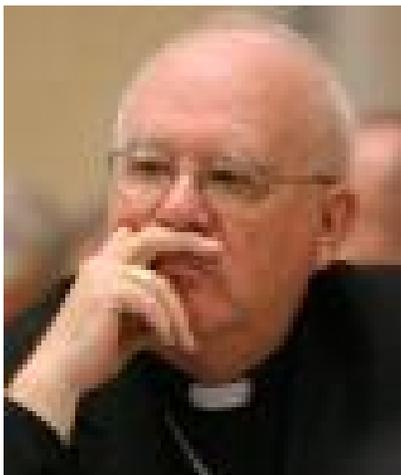
However, he continued, again quoting from the 2006 bishops' document, "If a Catholic in his or her personal or professional life were knowingly and obstinately to reject the defined doctrines of the church, or knowingly and obstinately repudiate her definitive teachings on moral issues, however, he or 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."

"The very first generation of Christians saw the need to examine one's conscience regarding one's worthiness to receive the Body and Blood of the Lord," the archbishop said, citing St. Paul in his Letter to the Corinthians (11:27-28).

While critical of Pelosi's statements and stands on abortion and other life issues, the archbishop described the member of St. Vincent de Paul Parish in San Francisco as "a gifted, dedicated and accomplished public servant" who has been "supportive of legislation that helped to implement some of the social teachings of the church."

He said the 10-term representative "has stated often her love for her faith and for the Catholic church."

The archbishop told *Catholic San Francisco* he had written the congresswoman personally about his statement and that he had a copy of it delivered to her office Sept. 4.



In the statement, Niederauer said Pelosi had mischaracterized church doctrine on

abortion and the beginning of life Aug. 24 on the television news magazine "Meet the Press," in a consequent press statement about the program, and during previous media appearances, including a teleconference with Catholic News Service.

He noted Pelosi had told "Meet the Press" anchor Tom Brokaw during the Aug. 24 broadcast: "I don't think anyone can tell you when life begins, when human life begins."

When Brokaw responded that the church "at the moment feels very strongly that it begins at the point of conception," Speaker Pelosi said, "I understand. And this is maybe 50 years or something like that."

In his statement Niederauer wrote, "For 20 centuries, not for 50 years, the Catholic church has taught that abortion is grievously sinful. Individual theologians may from time to time have speculated about the beginning of human life, but the church has consistently taught that abortion is wrong. The answer to the question, "When does life begin?" should not have an impact, we are told, on the woman's right to choose. Nevertheless, the woman's right to choose certainly has an impact on nascent human life."

"I regret the necessity of addressing these issues in so public a forum, but the widespread consternation among Catholics made it unavoidable," the archbishop said toward the end of his statement, concluding, "Speaker Pelosi has often said how highly she values her Catholic faith, and how much it is a source of joy for her. Accordingly, as her pastor, I am writing to invite her into a conversation with me about these matters. It is my obligation to teach forthrightly and to shepherd caringly, and that is my intent. Let us pray together that the Holy Spirit will guide us all toward a more profound understanding and appreciation for human life, and toward a resolution of these differences in truth and charity and peace."

In his statement, the archbishop cited multiple sources of church teaching on the evil of abortion including The Catechism of the Catholic Church, which states: "Human life must be respected and protected absolutely from the moment of conception. Since the first century the Church has affirmed the moral evil of every procured abortion. This teaching has not changed and remains unchangeable. Direct abortion, that is to say, willed either

as an end or a means, is grossly contrary to the moral law.? (2270-71)

In April *Catholic San Francisco* carried "An Open Letter to Nancy Pelosi" highly critical of the legislator's support of partial birth abortion. Authored by the director of archdiocese's Office of Public Policy and Social Concerns, George Wesolek, the commentary urged Pelosi to reconsider her outspoken support of the procedure which terminates "a viable, almost full-term human being, a child of God."

Pelosi has defended her position, quoted by the San Francisco Chronicle as saying, "This isn't really an abortion issue" but rather consideration of "a procedure that any parent would want her daughter to have access to if she needed it."

[Read the full text of Niederauer's statement](#) [1]

(Dan Morris-Young is editor of *Catholic San Francisco*.)

Support independent reporting on important issues.



Source URL (retrieved on 07/22/2017 - 09:45): <https://www.ncronline.org/news/politics/san-francisco-archbishop-invites-pelosi-discuss-abortion>

Links:

[1] <http://ncronline3.org/drupal/?q=node/1774>

[2] <https://www.ncronline.org/donate?clickSource=article-end>