



AMERICAN NATIONAL
CATHOLIC CHURCH

22 June 2021

Memorial of Ss. Thomas More and John Fisher

**The Most Reverend George R. Lucey, FCM,
Presiding Bishop of the American National Catholic Church,
Responds to the USCCB on Communion**

In the name of the Father, and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit!

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

At their annual June meeting, the United States (Roman) Catholic Conference of Bishops (USCCB) voted by nearly a 3-to-1 margin to draft a teaching document on receiving Communion.

The official USCCB rationale for the document is concern that only about one-third of practicing Roman Catholics in the United States believe in the Real Presence. This is genuinely worrisome, and I applaud the bishops' desire to educate the faithful.

But the way in which they're going about doing so is disingenuous. Apparently, the unstated motivation behind the proposed document for at least some of the bishops is to deny communion to elected officials, President Biden in particular, who publicly support the 1973 *Roe v Wade* Supreme Court decision.

More than one observer has noted that this appears to be an alarming "weaponization" of the Holy Eucharist, a not-so-subtle warning to Roman Catholic "liberal" politicians and public figures. They point out that the USCCB wasn't nearly as forceful in responding to the personal and public moral lapses of the immediately previous administration.

In urging the bishops to refrain from this weaponization, Pope Francis reminded them that the Eucharist isn't a reward for saints but nourishment for sinners. I agree with this position.

Receiving the Body and Blood of the Lord changes our very mode of being because as the Vatican-II Council reminds us, it is "the source and summit of the Christian life." (*Lumen Gentium* 11) It serves to rejuvenate us spiritually by conforming us more closely to the image of God in which we're made. It binds the faithful together in genuine Christian *koinonia*. It strengthens the members Christ's Body to proclaim the Gospel and serve the world.

I appreciate that there are strong feelings on both sides of the abortion issue. But using the Eucharist as a weapon in the political debate is a sacrilege that inevitably will damage the Christian community. I'm confident that Christ at the Last Supper was very much aware of the sinners in his midst—including Judas Iscariot—when he instituted the Eucharist. Yet there is no evidence that he fed some and withheld from others. Instead, he welcomed everyone to the table. His Body and Blood are love gifts generously offered to us all.

We in the American National Catholic Church joyfully follow his example of profligate love. We welcome everyone, as the Lord did, to his table, and we pray that the USCCB bishops will do likewise.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Most Reverend George R. Lucey, FCM". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Most Reverend George R. Lucey, FCM
Presiding Bishop