

# Editorial: If Catholics unite, could politicians ignore us then?

For years now, especially during national election cycles, American Catholics have been politically homeless.

Once a major voting bloc, Catholics in the United States have found themselves increasingly facing a hostile political landscape, uncomfortable with the choices presented to them by the two major political parties.

If such has been the growing sentiment for decades – really since *Roe v. Wade* and the commencement of the Democratic Party's love affair with "choice" and the deep pockets of the abortion lobby – then we have entered a whole new frontier with our current election cycle.

No longer satisfied with keeping abortion "safe, legal and rare" (the line presidential candidate Bill Clinton used in 1992), the Democratic candidates now candidly and brazenly accept the premise that support for abortion is the litmus test for the party. Abortion must be codified into federal law. Pro-abortion judges are non-negotiable. The Hyde Amendment, banning federal funding for abortions, must go. Anyone who disagrees need not apply for membership. Your vote is not desired.

That message was given loud and clear to Kristen Day, executive director of Democrats For Life of America, who confronted Democratic presidential candidate Pete Buttigieg at a town hall in Iowa a few days before the caucuses. Day, who wrote about the encounter in an op-ed in USA Today, asked Buttigieg if he would support "more moderate platform language" to court the votes of 21 million pro-life Democrats.

Buttigieg responded: "I'm not going to try to earn your vote by tricking you. I am pro-choice, and I believe that a woman ought to be able to make that decision." Case closed.

"Buttigieg likes to talk about 'future former Republicans,'" Day responded in USA Today. "With his extreme stance on abortion, though, he is doing precisely the opposite: building an army of future former Democrats, disturbed by Trump but forced into a corner. These include several friends of mine. I don't want to join them."

But many have, including Charles Camosy, an associate professor of theological and social ethics at Fordham University and longtime Democratic Party influencer, who recently resigned from the Board of Directors of Democrats for Life in particular – and from the Democratic Party as a whole.

"For someone who is progressive on most issues, this decision doesn't come easy," Camosy wrote in The New York Post. "Like most Democrats, I believe government has an energetic role to play to support women, families and children. I support paid family leave, help with unaffordable child care, labor union rights, the Affordable Care Act, child and adoption tax credits and much else of the kind. I'm worried about climate change. I'm an outspoken vegetarian. I believe in welcoming refugees and immigrants. I oppose needless wars. But the party gave me no choice. Yes, ours was a small group, but as many as a third of Democrats identify as pro-life. Even when party leadership finally met with us, they didn't take us seriously. When we showed them that pro-life Democrats would beat Republicans in certain districts, it didn't matter. Even when we called for more reproductive choices for women with difficult pregnancies through services like perinatal hospice care, party leaders ignored us. Anything even hinting that abortion is less than good now violates party orthodoxy."

That last line, in particular, illustrates how extreme the Democratic Party has become regarding abortion. As more and

more Catholics flee a party that historically was a safe haven, more and more Catholics – faced with a choice of a Republican Party that leaves much to be desired within its own platform – find themselves figuratively on the street. Politically homeless.

Is there a reasonable solution that would enable Catholics to follow their conscience yet continue to participate in the political life of this country? There isn't a perfect one. But we can refocus our efforts to try to make inroads at the local and state levels on issues that our faith demands of us: being pro-life at all stages, from the beginning of life to the end of life; being pro-family; caring for the poor; caring for the vulnerable, including immigrants; protecting our common home; promoting the common good. Involvement with state Catholic conferences can be a good start.

But we also must do something more fundamental. We must manage to find unity within our own ranks to be able to more effectively influence policy and political decisions. If 50 million American Catholics were able to speak with one loud, clear voice on the issues that are critical to our faith, we could not be ignored.

*Our Sunday Visitor Editorial Board: Gretchen R. Crowe, Scott P. Richert, Scott Warden, York Young*