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NCR staff reporter Brian Fraga [reported](#) from the U.S. Catholic bishops' general assembly in Baltimore on Nov. 15 that the group had again declared abortion the 'preeminent priority' for Catholic voters. Following are NCR reader responses to this story with letters that have been edited for length and clarity.

The U.S. Catholic bishops, with their obsession with abortion, would drive Catholics in the 2024 presidential election into the arms of Donald Trump. For their next group photo, I suggest red MAGA caps be required.

BILL KRISTOF

Parkville, Maryland



We are a nation headed toward disaster. Every night on the news we hear of shootings and violence at every level of society. People are armed with guns of all sizes and hot to engage in fights. This is a real and significant problem. Even in our church there is heated debate about where we are headed and threats of violence. We need a peace broker with the credentials to lessen the temperature here in America. A peacemaker that can open people up to discussion and cooperation to work on the problems of society peacefully. Politicians are not going to make that happen. They, too, resort to violence.

Seems like a job for all of Christianity. A good start would be for the Catholic Church to bring together our family in Christ to work for a better, more positive approach to issues. Instead, the USCCB will be focused on its all or nothing abortion policy as the more immediate problem in America. We claim this country is based on Christian values. It's time to spend time and resources on reducing all the violence in this country and get back to Christian values before it's too late.

MICHAEL HAZARD
Milford, Ohio

The bishops have overlooked the problem of the typical civil-law solution to this problem. Many states have legislated an absolute ban on abortion. This does not correspond to Catholic theology, as the bishops ought to know very well. Just to mention one prominent exception in Catholic moral theology, ectopic gestation (more commonly called ectopic pregnancy) is the fertilization of the ovum in the fallopian tube. It is necessary for the life of the mother to abort the fertilized ovum. Any state law that forbids this cannot be approved by the Catholic bishops. The simple solution is to separate theology and civil law. They are two different matters.

JEROME F. WEBER
New Hartford, New York

The U.S. Catholic bishops decided at their general assembly that "the threat of abortion" will remain the "preeminent priority" for their political guidance to Catholic voters in the year leading up to the 2024 presidential election. Bishops could not even talk about women's ordination and married clergy at the 2023 Synod. Bishops

suddenly recovered their voices.

Now Bishops are tripling down for fear of giving women autonomy in a free and democratic nation. Bishops can still individually counsel people to follow them, but this is the nail in the coffin of the Roman Catholic Church for core Vatican II Roman Catholics.

LYNN NORTON

Gardena, California

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The bishops' arguments against abortion would have more credibility if instead of just arguing for the abolition of the procedure, they would address the reasons and call for programs to support birth. They could persuade the public rather than impose rules by fiat. Their failure to persuade was driven home in the many plebiscites over the past year which supported abortion access.

Pope Francis has argued that climate change is a mortal danger to our population. Thousands die from the effects of high temperatures, extreme rainfall with flooding, crop failures, etc. Our physical environment is becoming untenable for supporting life in the most challenged areas of the world. However, arguing for programs to curtail climate change, or even to address the most egregious effects, does not resonate with individuals or groups who are intent upon reducing the size of government so it is incapable of addressing social and environmental issues.

If our bishops continue to adhere to the wishes of that group at the expense of the lives of millions, then they can not claim to have the personal well being of the people they shepherd in mind. Their political posturing precludes their ability to persuade and since democracy requires persuasion they find themselves not able to influence the voters who determine election outcomes. Perhaps many of our ecclesiastic leaders prefer the alternative to democracy, which seems to be the pathway one of our political parties is intent upon effecting. The thesis of "Faithful Citizenship" seems to have those political actors in mind to the exclusion of those who could actually address climate change as well as expand and enforce the social safety net to curtail abortion while respecting individual civil rights.

CHARLES A. LEGUERN

Granger, Indiana

I believe Pope Francis has stated that abortion is evil and equates it to "ordering a hit man." Please don't downplay Pope Francis' stance on abortion.

HUGH DENNING

Denver, Colorado

Yes, abortion is the 'preeminent priority' for Catholic voters. But not as they say. This voting Catholic plans to vote for candidates who will protect a woman's right to control her health and her body.

MARGGIE S.

Albany, New York