

June 6, 2022

Open Letter to Catholic Politicians and the Faithful on Worthily Receiving Communion

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

The recently concluded 2022 legislative session was difficult for many Coloradans who watched in dismay as their state legislators rushed one of the most extreme abortion bills in the country through the chambers of the Capitol and to Governor Polis' desk for his signature.

As HB22-1279, the Reproductive Health Equity Act (RHEA), made its way through the legislature, there was a strong outcry against it. Thousands of people wrote to their lawmakers. Over 350 people testified against RHEA in the House and more than 215 testified against it in the Senate into the early hours of the morning. RHEA allows for abortion from conception until birth and for any reason, including the child's race, sex, or a disability.

According to some of the lawmakers supporting RHEA, this new law is designed to make our state an abortion destination and "safe haven."¹ They expect pregnant mothers to come flooding in from surrounding states for abortions if *Roe v. Wade* is overturned. It causes us profound sadness and distress to know that some Catholic legislators voted for this.

We have a strong desire to discuss the spiritual and cultural impact of laws like RHEA with politicians of both parties who say they are Catholic and who represent people in our state. As their shepherds we want to ensure that they understand the Church's teaching on receiving Holy Communion and the proper spiritual disposition for doing so. Efforts have already been made to speak with several of these lawmakers, but unfortunately, very few of them have accepted the invitation to meet.

During the voting on the Reproductive Health Equity Act, it became clear by their public votes that several Catholic lawmakers support ending the lives of unborn children and declaring that a "fertilized egg, embryo or fetus" has no "independent or derivative rights" in Colorado. These pre-born babies are worth less than those who have had the gift of being born, according to this morally bankrupt logic. At the same time, we would like to publicly thank state Senators Barbara Kirkmeyer, Kevin Priola and Jim Smallwood and Representative Andres Pico, Catholic lawmakers who voted to protect the unborn and against allowing our state to strip them of their God-given right to life.

Voting for RHEA was participating in a gravely sinful action because it facilitates the killing of innocent unborn babies, and those Catholic politicians who have done so have very likely placed themselves outside of the communion of the Church.

¹ State Sen. Brittany Petterson (@petterson4co) tweet from March 23, 2022; Statement from Sen. Julie Gonzalez marking the signing of RHEA. <https://www.cohousedems.com/joint-release-signed-historic-reproductive-health-equity-act-becomes-law-in-colorado>

As we said with our fellow U.S. Bishops in our recent statement *The Mystery of the Eucharist in the Life of the Church*,

“To receive the Body and Blood of Christ while in a state of mortal sin represents a contradiction. The person who, by his or her own action, has broken communion with Christ and his Church but receives the Blessed Sacrament, acts incoherently, both claiming and rejecting communion at the same time. It is thus a counter sign, a lie—it expresses a communion that in fact has been broken.”²

Moreover, receiving the Eucharist in a state of mortal sin is sacrilegious because it is “a failure to show the reverence due to the sacred Body and Blood of Christ.”³

Finally, when other Catholics see public figures receiving Jesus in such a spiritual state their resolve to be faithful to the Gospel can be weakened. A Catholic politician or public figure leading or encouraging others to do evil is a failure to respect the souls of others and is what the Church defines as “scandal.”⁴

Until public repentance takes place and sacramental absolution is received in Confession, we ask that those Catholic legislators who live or worship in Colorado and who have voted for RHEA, to voluntarily refrain from receiving Holy Communion.

The burden from their decision does not rest upon the shoulders of priests, deacons or lay Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist. It rests upon the consciences and souls of those politicians who have chosen to support this evil and unjust law.

We pray that this letter and our request to refrain from receiving Jesus in the Eucharist spurs sincere reflection and conversion in the hearts of those who have participated in allowing this grave act of injustice to become law. This request is not one that we make lightly, but since it is our duty to safeguard the faith and care for the souls of all the faithful – including these politicians – we must make it.

We are always willing to engage in conversation with any Catholic politician to whom this applies, and we want you to know that we regularly pray for all who hold public office.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



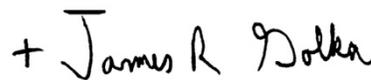
Most Reverend Samuel J. Aquila
Archbishop of Denver



Most Reverend Stephen J. Berg
Bishop of Pueblo



Most Reverend Jorge H. Rodriguez
Auxiliary Bishop of Denver



Most Reverend James R. Golka
Bishop of Colorado Springs

² *The Mystery of the Eucharist in the Life of the Church*, n.47, USCCB Publishing, January 2022.

³ *Ibid.* n.48.

⁴ Catechism of the Catholic Church, #2284-2287.