

Editorial: What a Catholic president should do

Nearly 50 years after Justice Harry Blackmun discovered the “right” to an abortion in the “penumbras” and “emanations” of the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, Justice Samuel Alito revealed that this right was as real as the emperor’s new clothes. With the U.S. Supreme Court’s decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization*, [overturning *Roe v. Wade*](#) (1973) and *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* (1992) and returning regulation of abortion to the states, federal interference in the various states’ protection of the life of the unborn should have come to an end.

Instead, two weeks to the day after the court released its decision in *Dobbs*, President Joe Biden signed an executive order to try to blunt the effect of the ruling and to reassert federal authority over abortion.

In signing his executive order, Biden characterized Justice Alito’s opinion as “extreme,” “totally wrongheaded” and “an exercise in raw political power” that “wasn’t a constitutional judgment.” None of the reporters present at the White House signing ceremony asked him what he thought of the statement released by the newly minted junior senator from Delaware in January 1973. The young Joe Biden spoke with the mind of the Church, declaring that *Roe v. Wade* “was not correctly decided” and that “the right of abortion was not secured by the Constitution.”

President Biden’s Catholic faith was frequently mentioned by the secular media in the months leading up to the 2020 presidential election. Unsurprisingly, it was rarely referred to in their reports on the signing of his executive order.

In the White House on July 8, the country’s second Catholic

president missed the opportunity of a century to demonstrate that the Church's teaching on the sanctity of life does not, as so many advocates for abortion argue, extend only to the unborn child.

President Biden could have supported the expansion of the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) to companies with fewer than 50 employees and the conversion of some portion of that leave from unpaid to paid. He could have called for caps to be placed on the cost of health-insurance premiums for women of childbearing age and for the expansion of Medicaid coverage and food-assistance programs for low-income families. He could have announced new federal partnerships with the states and with nonprofit organizations to make adoption services more broadly available and more affordable. He could have worked with members of his party in Congress to introduce legislation to transform the federally mandated minimum wage into a true living wage that would allow more families to get by on a single income. He could have reached across party lines to pledge federal support for similar state and local programs consistent with a culture of life.

Had he done so, every article, every radio and television news report, would have mentioned that these initiatives were the concrete manifestation of the president's deep and abiding Catholic faith, and pundits of nearly every political stripe would have praised him for attempting to bring all Americans together.

But President Biden chose to do none of these things. Instead, he turned the moment into a crassly political one, urging women to "turn out in record numbers to reclaim the rights that have been taken from them by the court." He ordered the secretary of Health and Human Services, Xavier Becerra, to ensure widespread access to the abortion drug RU-486 and to expand the distribution of "emergency contraception," which works by preventing the implantation of a fertilized egg in the uterine wall (and, in some cases, by causing the uterus to

reject one already implanted). Like Biden, Becerra is a Catholic; as a member of the U.S. House of Representatives from California, he received in 2012 a 100% favorable rating from Planned Parenthood and NARAL Pro-Choice America, and, as the attorney general of California, he argued the government's case against the Little Sisters of the Poor when they sought exemption from the requirement to provide contraception under the Affordable Care Act.

In January 2021, while congratulating President Biden "on becoming the second Catholic to attain the highest office in the land," [this editorial board](#) urged him "to use that office to bring the wisdom of Catholic teaching to bear on all aspects of American policy, foreign and domestic." We prayed that "his own faith will be strengthened, and that he will reconsider those areas in which he personally and politically departs from Catholic teaching – chief among them the protection of the unborn."

At the same time, we reminded our readers that all of us "should follow the example of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, who have lent their support over the years to all good policies, regardless of the political persuasion of those who have put them forward." And we noted, too, that, "on those occasions when proposed policies would undermine the common good and threaten the health or the very lives of the most vulnerable, we must vigorously oppose such actions – even if the candidate for whom we voted is now the elected official proposing such policies."

This is one of those occasions.

We urge President Biden to rescind his executive order and to use the power of his office instead to show the world how a truly Catholic vision of a culture of life could unite this country and transform the future of the United States.

Our Sunday Visitor Editorial Board: Gretchen R. Crowe, Scott

P. Richert, Scott Warden, York Young