



Written by [R. Cort Kirkwood](#) on February 9, 2012

Canon Lawyer: Pelosi May Not Receive Communion

A noted Catholic canon lawyer has again called upon his church to bar former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) from receiving Holy Communion.

Ed Peters, [who blogs](#) at "In Light of the Law," reiterated his earlier legal opinion on Pelosi in light of her vociferous support for the Obama administration's edict that Catholic employers [must provide](#), with no co-pays, insurance coverage for contraceptives, including birth control pills and other abortifacients. Catholic teaching enjoins the faithful from using contraception to stymie pregnancy.



Pelosi is famous for refusing to obey the teachings of her church. But no bishops seem to have the courage to discipline the famous leftist from San Francisco. Indeed, the "devout Catholic," as she describes herself, [said she has](#) "great respect for our bishops when they are my pastor [sic]. As lobbyists in Washington D.C., we have some areas of disagreement."

Abortion and contraception, it seems, are two of those areas.

Why No Communion

Pelosi is one of the [loudest supporters](#) of abortion in Congress despite her Catholic faith, which says abortion is murder and a mortal sin.

Pelosi's bishops, apparently, have not publicly admonished Pelosi and instructed her not to receive communion. Catholics believe the communion wafer they consume at Mass [is the real body and blood of Christ](#). Catholics must not receive communion in a state of mortal sin; i.e., a state of sin that — if not reconciled sacramentally beforehand — would send one to Hell upon death.

Church law on receiving communion is governed by Canons 915 and 916, the first of which [reads thusly](#):

Those who have been excommunicated or interdicted after the imposition or declaration of the penalty and others obstinately persevering in manifest grave sin are not to be admitted to holy communion.

The next [canon explains](#) the the duties of the faithful:

A person who is conscious of grave sin is not to celebrate Mass or receive the body of the Lord without previous sacramental confession unless there is a grave reason and there is no opportunity to confess; in this case the person is to remember the obligation to make an act of perfect contrition which includes the resolution of confessing as soon as possible.

Because Pelosi publicly disputes Church teaching and votes for abortion, she is not only cooperating in procuring them but also giving scandal to the faithful. Thus, she is ineligible to present herself for communion.



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Her support for the Obama administration's totalitarian mandate on contraception further cements the matter, [Peters observed](#).

If her prolonged public conduct does not qualify as obstinate perseverance in manifest grave sin, then," [Peters wrote](#) two years ago, "in all sincerity, I must admit to not knowing what would constitute obstinate perseverance in manifest grave sin."

Updating readers, [he opined](#):

[It's now](#) February of 2012, and nothing in Pelosi's conduct over the last 23 months suggests any emendation of her attitudes toward killing unborn babies, etc., etc., etc. Indeed her recent call for Catholics qua Catholics to unite behind, of all things!, President Obama's plan to impose immoral policies on private medical insurance plans ... suggests that Pelosi's views, like Pharaoh's heart, have only hardened with time.

Peters is referring to [Pelosi's claim](#) that supporting Obama's contraception mandate really means she "going to stick with my fellow Catholics." Said Pelosi, "I think it was a very courageous decision that they made, and I support it."

"Canon 915, as I and others have explained many times, is not about impositions on individual conscience, it's about public consequences for public behavior," [Peters wrote](#), continuing:

It's about taking people at their word and acknowledging the character of their actions. It's about not pretending that people don't really mean what they repeatedly say and what they repeatedly do.

Nancy Pelosi obviously means exactly what she says, and she regularly backs up her words with deeds. She deserves to be taken seriously. Very seriously.

Peters has also explained that Canon 915 doesn't merely authorize bishops and priests to refuse communion to Pelosi and her pro-abortion brethren. The canons require it.

Pelosi's Position

In 2008, Pelosi and Vice President Biden actually [tried to claim](#) that Church teaching on abortion is muddled and inconsistent. [Said Pelosi](#): "This is an issue that I have studied for a long time. And what I know is over the centuries, the doctors of the church have not been able to make that definition ... St. Augustine said at three months. We don't know. The point is, is that it shouldn't have an impact on the woman's right to choose."

The error was of such magnitude that bishops immediately [jumped to explain](#) the truth to the public: The Church has condemned abortion from its beginning.

Yet the bishops have not barred Pelosi and most other leftist Catholics from communion.

One bishop, at least, has taken a stand against a pro-abortion politician. Also in 2008, Kansas City Archbishop [Joseph Naumann ordered](#) Kathleen Sebelius, the pro-abortion Secretary of Health and Human Services, not to present herself for communion.

Peters on Other Unfaithful

Peters' pronouncement on Pelosi isn't his first on either her or other politicians.

As [The New American reported](#) in February 2011, Peters says that New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo, who signed a bill to legalized sodomite marriage, is also ineligible for communion.



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When the *New York Daily News* described Cuomo's receiving communion, Peters offered an opinion about the rabid leftist, who lives in public concubinage with his mistress, the Food Network's Sandra Lee.

Cuomo's list of offenses barring him from the communion rail are many, [Peters wrote](#), noting:

Cuomo, on the grounds of his public concubinage alone (and setting aside complications arising from his strong support for legalized abortion, etc.), should not approach Communion per [Canon 916](#); if he does approach, he should be refused the sacrament per [Canon 915](#).

Cuomo should still attend Mass, of course ([c. 1247](#)), and within one year of his last Confession he should duly receive that sacrament again ([c. 989](#)), but he should not be taking Communion while he lives in public concubinage. And if Lee is Catholic, the exact same analysis would apply to her.

That opinion invited a tongue lashing from Cuomo's bishop, the Most Rev. Thomas Hubbard, who suggested that the canon lawyer was issuing illegitimate "pastoral judgments."

Peters disagreed, noting that he merely judged a public situation and the public behavior of Catholic politicians and held them up against canon law. Imposing a penalty for said behavior, he wrote, rests with other authorities, meaning the bishops.

Pelosi's position in the Church is clear, but the bishops have not acted. In her latest repudiation of Catholic teaching by supporting Obama, she stands athwart the firmly stated position of the Catholic bishops. They have [furiously denounced](#) the President's mandate that Catholic institutions provide insurance covering contraception.

Two weeks ago, Catholics at Mass across America heard pastoral letters in which the bishops flatly stated they will disobey the law and explained what is at stake in the law Pelosi supports:

"[U]nless the rule is overturned," the bishops wrote, "we Catholics will be compelled either to violate our consciences, or to drop health coverage for our employees (and suffer the penalties for doing so). The Administration's sole concession was to give our institutions one year to comply.

"We cannot — we will not — comply with this unjust law."



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