

# Opposition to amendment cannot be defended on Catholic grounds

Unfortunately, as of this writing, there is a stalemate in the Kansas Legislature over the passage of the “Value Them Both” amendment that seeks to return to the elected representatives of Kansas the authority to determine public policy regarding the protection of the lives of unborn children, as well as safeguarding parents from living with the incredible burden of being an uninformed participant in an unnecessary loss of life.

Governor Kelly’s outlandish claim that the passage of the “Value Them Both” amendment would somehow put Kansas in the “Dark Ages” is laughable, were not consequences of the failure to pass the amendment so deadly serious.

Evidently, the governor believes that the “Dark Ages” were as recent as less than one year ago. The amendment only returns to Kansans and their elected representatives the authority that they exercised 10 months ago, prior to the Kansas Supreme Court claiming to discover a right to abortion in the Kansas Constitution.

Does anyone seriously believe the authors of the Kansas Constitution more than 150 years ago intended to protect a so-called right to abortion?

In the Jan. 16 meeting of the Kansas, Missouri, Iowa and Nebraska Bishops with Pope Francis, the Holy Father stated that he poses two questions to those who support legalized abortion.

First, he asks: Is it ever right to kill a child to solve a problem? Secondly, Pope Francis queries: Is it ever right to hire someone to kill a child to solve a problem?

The Holy Father, while acknowledging the bluntness of the questions, believes they make clear what is genuinely



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at stake with each and every abortion.

Sadly, in the Senate debate, a Catholic senator from our archdiocese, Pat Pettey, in an effort to explain her opposition to the “Value Them Both” amendment, stated: “Kansans deserve the right to make their own personal, private medical decisions without government interference. A constitutional amendment would allow increased government overreach into our private lives. These measures are a violation of the core principles my Catholic faith teaches — namely, the priority of conscience, the importance of social justice and the respect for religious freedom. The Kansas Supreme Court reached a thoughtful and well-reasoned conclusion that protects every Kansan’s right to personal autonomy. I vote NO!”

Sadly, Senator Pettey’s statement is fraught with multiple errors in logic and Catholic teaching.

1) The amendment does not allow the government to do anything more than exercise the same authority that it had less than one year ago before the court decision. How does such an amendment allow increased government overreach?

2) The senator misrepresents Catholic moral teaching on multiple levels. By invoking

her Catholic faith for her reason for voting against the amendment, the senator actually created an even more serious moral problem for herself. The senator not only has misapplied Catholic moral teaching by her vote, but she is actually attempting to confuse others about church teaching.

3) Senator Pettey justifies her vote by invoking the “priority of conscience,” while ignoring the responsibility for the proper formation of conscience. The Catechism of the Catholic Church states: “The education of conscience is indispensable for human beings who are subjected to negative influences and tempted by sin to prefer their own judgment and to reject authoritative teachings” (1783).

4) Senator Pettey invokes the importance of social justice to rationalize her vote. The Catechism of the Catholic Church in the section devoted to social justice states: “Respect for the human person entails respect for the rights that flow from his dignity as a creature. These rights are prior to society and must be recognized by it. They are the basis of the moral legitimacy of every authority: by flouting them, or refusing to recognize them in its positive legislation, a society undermines its own moral legitimacy” (1930).

In addressing the issue of abortion directly the catechism states: “Human life must be respected and protect-

ed absolutely from the moment of conception. From the first moment of his existence, a human being must be recognized as having the rights of a person — among which is the inviolable right of every innocent being to life” (2270); “Since the first century the Church has affirmed the moral evil of procured abortion. The teaching has not changed and remains unchangeable” (2271); “Formal cooperation in abortion constitutes a grave offense” (2272); “The inalienable right to life of every innocent human individual is a *constitutive element of a civil society and its legislation*” (2273).

Sadly, the senator does not seem to understand that the right to life is one of the foundational principles of the church’s social justice teaching.

5) The senator invokes “respect for religious freedom.” Pope Francis in our Jan. 16 meeting reminded us that the protection of the life of the unborn is first and foremost a human rights issue, not a religious issue.

One does not need to have any religious belief to know that it is gravely wrong to take the life of another human being. On the other hand, coercing Kansans to be complicit in abortion through payment of their taxes is a religious liberty issue.

The senator mischaracterizes the Supreme Court’s decision as thoughtful and well-reasoned. There is nothing thoughtful in the court’s trampling on both conscience rights and religious freedom of Kansans.

6) Finally, the senator makes the incredible claim that the court’s decision “protects every Kansan’s right to personal autonomy.”

The court certainly has not protected the autonomy of the unborn child. If the Supreme Court and the senator



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Feb. 14  
Groundbreaking for parish activity center — Curé of Ars, Leawood

Feb. 15  
Annual White Mass and reception — Our Lady of Good Counsel Church, Kansas City, Missouri

Pastoral visit — Holy Cross, Overland Park

Feb. 16  
Mass of thanksgiving for church renovation and altar dedication — St. Joseph Church, Topeka

Feb. 17  
Permanent deacon candidate pre-ordination interviews

Confirmation for Leavenworth parishes — Immaculate Conception-St. Joseph, Leavenworth

Feb. 18  
Envisioning Team meeting

Confirmation — Mater Dei, Topeka

Feb. 19  
Mass — Hayden High School, Topeka

Donnelly College board meeting

Confirmation — St. Ann, Effingham

Feb. 20  
Worldwide Life Runners pro-life banquet — Omaha, Nebraska

Feb. 20-22  
Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulcher winter council meeting — Omaha

Feb. 23  
Junior high rally Mass — Prairie Star Ranch, Williamsburg

Feb. 24  
Adoration — Maur Hill-Mount Academy, Atchison

Finance Council meeting

Confirmation — Curé of Ars, Leawood

think that they are really protecting women by disallowing the regulation of the abortion industry, I challenge them to view the movies “Unplanned” and “Gosnell: The Trial of America’s Biggest Serial Killer.”

Next to the child, women are the group most victimized by abortion. In our Project Rachel post-abortion ministry, we see the devastation suffered by women, who were often pressured into an abortion by the child’s father.

Merely allowing the people of Kansas through their elected representatives to be able to decide public policy regarding abortion is not a return to the “Dark Ages.” Hailing the killing of our own children as a right does

envelop our culture in a terrible ethical darkness.

When a society not only permits the killing of children but coerces citizens to participate in the travesty of the most fundamental of all human rights, then as the catechism warns: “such a society undermines its own moral legitimacy.”

It is disappointing that we are four votes short in the House of Representatives from attaining the super majority required to place the “Value Them Both” amendment on the ballot for Kansas voters.

We must not yield to discouragement, but must persevere in our prayers and our advocacy.

The lives of children and the soul of our state hang in the balance!