



## The Supreme Court and the Future of *Roe*

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Nearly two decades ago, a friend of mine attended a conference in Washington, D.C. The meeting had the theme of "supercomputing and the human person." Most of the attendees were medical doctors, computer executives, mathematicians, biologists, chemists and other scientists. A few philosophers took part as well. My friend was there on behalf of the apostolic nunciature. He came away with three main impressions.

*First*, there was a lot of talk about supercomputing, and almost none about who or what the human person is. *Second*, the nickname for the human body among the attendees was "wetware," or more crudely, "meat puppet." *Third*, when participants learned that my friend and his wife practiced NFP, they were genuinely fascinated – fascinated in the same way Margaret Mead studied pre-modern tribal islanders.

Most found it baffling that anyone might have *any* moral qualms about birth control, and especially about using something as simple as the pill. The idea of a married couple freely choosing to avoid sexual intimacy when a technology could prevent the worry of a pregnancy seemed weird. Abnormal. Unnatural.

Of course, in the years since that conference, the question of what is and what isn't "natural" for the human person has been obscured by an even more basic confusion about what is and what isn't *human*. To borrow a thought from the scholar Michael Hanby, "man's technological dominion [has] not only given us the [birth control] pill and some new moral dilemmas . . . [but] also put the truth of the human person – and his future as *human* – radically into question." In the space of a few generations we've moved from seeing the human body as an integral part of our human identity to a kind of clay container for our wills. Our flesh is now simply the raw material for our imaginations, our illusions, and our appetites.

The point is this: Human beings are embodied spirits. Our bodies, and what we do with them, are integral to who we are. They *matter*, because God created them, and Jesus redeemed them on Golgotha. Creation is pregnant with purpose, and our bodies and sexuality are ordered to that purpose – in other words, to new life and love, rooted in the complementarity of woman and man. Our flesh is not morally neutral. It's not simply "wetware" or raw meat or modeling clay for the will, but a revelation of God's glory demanding reverence and stewardship.

This makes us witnesses to a meaning and dignity of the human person that puts us at odds with the spirit of our age, an age perfectly captured by the 1973 Supreme Court *Roe v. Wade* decision and its license to kill the unborn. The cultural civil war triggered by *Roe* and its enshrinement of permissive abortion has never abated, and it continues full force (and rightly so) today. The stakes are high. Without a guaranteed right to life -- a right that includes and recognizes the humanity of the unborn child -- all other rights are legal fictions.

Predictably, as soon as Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy announced his retirement earlier this summer, pro-abortion groups began lobbying the U.S. Senate hard to reject any nominee who might question or oppose *Roe v. Wade*. The irony here is exquisite. In past elections, abortion advocates have piously lectured Catholics to avoid making the abortion issue a "litmus test" in rejecting candidates for office. Now -- no surprise -- many of the same abortion advocates are doing exactly what they warned us *not* to do: making abortion a litmus test in rejecting Supreme Court nominees. The double standard is obvious. We need to contact our Commonwealth's two U.S. Senators (Robert Casey, Jr., and Patrick Toomey) and urge them to resist such lobbying. And just as importantly, we *need to pray*.

Each Friday, from August 3 to September 28, 2018, the Church asks American Catholics to join in a nine-week effort of prayer, fasting and education that a change in the U.S. Supreme Court will move our nation closer to the day when every human being is protected in law and welcomed in life.

As part of a U.S. bishops' national "Call to Prayer," participants can receive weekly prayer reminders by text message or email. In addition to fasting on Fridays, participants will be encouraged to pray one *Our Father*, *Hail Mary*, and *Glory Be* for this intention and will receive important facts about how *Roe* is not health care, is bad law, and fails women.

I urge all Catholics in the Greater Philadelphia area to sign up at [www.usccb.org/pray](http://www.usccb.org/pray) for this effort and the continuing Call to Prayer initiatives. The choice of our nation's next Supreme Court justice will have an extraordinary impact on the future course of our culture. We need to do everything we can to ensure that the right choice is made.

*Senator Casey can be reached at 393 Russell Senate Office Building, Washington, DC 20510, (202) 224-6324. Senator Toomey can be reached at 248 Russell Senate Office Building Washington, DC 20510, (202) 224-4254. Each can also be contacted through the Pennsylvania Catholic Conference at <https://www.pacatholic.org/resources/contact-elected-officials/>*