

Archbishop William Lori of Baltimore was interviewed by NPR about the Church's stance on abortion. A [link](#) to the interview is here and a transcript of the interview is below.

RACHEL MARTIN: At the outset, I think it is important just to establish the church's position on abortion, which is that life begins at conception; abortion is never OK; and there should be no exceptions for rape or incest. Is that correct?

ARCHBISHOP LORI: The cornerstone of the church's whole social teaching is that human life is sacred from the moment of conception until natural death. The church also teaches that it is important to surround people in difficult circumstances with love, care and necessary services and to create the kind of conditions in society where every person at every stage of life is able to flourish.

MARTIN: Is there anything in that definition I just gave that was incorrect? That life...

ARCHBISHOP LORI: No.

MARTIN: ...Begins at conception; abortion is never OK; and there should be no exceptions for rape or incest.

ARCHBISHOP LORI: That would be essentially correct. But it needs to be contextualized, yes.

MARTIN: Let's work for that context. How do you define the sin that is committed by a woman who has had an abortion?

ARCHBISHOP LORI: Our focus is not on the sin of the mother. Our focus is not on assigning blame. Our focus is walking with moms in need - helping them, loving them and saying, can't we do better than taking that unborn life? Can't we bring it into this world and care for it and at the same time care for the mom?

MARTIN: At least one state is considering criminalizing the act of having an abortion.

ARCHBISHOP LORI: And we are not in agreement with that. Never - never have the American bishops or the Catholic Church favored criminalizing women.

MARTIN: So it is your intention to focus more on what you describe as compassionate care for mothers. Specifically, what services does it encompass?

ARCHBISHOP LORI: We are asking bishops, pastors and their co-workers, mostly laywomen, to come to know women in their communities who are facing difficult pregnancies and to find out what their needs are - what are the unmet needs? - and to just help them in a very, very practical way with essential necessities.

MARTIN: These are all things that have existed for a long time in this country.

ARCHBISHOP LORI: Yes.

MARTIN: So what's going to be different?

ARCHBISHOP LORI: It's simply an intensification. What we do when there is a new situation is we respond to it. We see the possible overturning of Roe as an opportunity to serve more women.

MARTIN: If I can push you to be specific, is the church going to pay for prenatal care? Is the church going to provide full-time, free or subsidized child care for these babies or employment for women who couldn't afford to have a child?

ARCHBISHOP LORI: The church does not claim to be a comprehensive solution to all of those problems. But yes, the church is a very vocal advocate for providing those things and in some instances does provide those things, yes.

MARTIN: You use the word intensification of pre-existing programs. So that is going to cost money. And I want to ask how financially feasible this is. I mean, if you just take Michigan - it's one of more than two dozen states where bans or strict limits on abortion would go into effect if the court overturns Roe. In just one year, 2020, there were 30,000 legal abortions there. So if Roe's overturned, there could be, obviously, thousands of unwanted babies. The church, as you know, is already financially strapped because of the lawsuit settlements from the sex abuse crisis. Parishes are closing all over the country. How are you going to come up with the money to care for these babies and their families?

ARCHBISHOP LORI: I would not underestimate the generosity and love of not only Catholics, but so many people of goodwill. And there are so many people who also would want those babies, who would love to adopt and offer them a chance in life. It's kind of what we're about here.

MARTIN: Some recent polls from reputable, nonpartisan groups, like the Pew Center, indicate that more than half of all Catholics in this country believe abortion should be legal in all or most cases. How does the church reconcile this constant tension between leadership and the people in the pews?

ARCHBISHOP LORI: We've done some polling of our own. What we find is that there is - a solid majority of people in the country think there ought to be some restrictions on abortion. We do have some conflicted Catholics. But when Catholics understand the compassionate response of the church and are invited to join in that compassionate response, their view changes.

MARTIN: I heard you mention earlier that the church, from your view, doesn't want to focus on the sin, wants to focus on the help of a mother and child. But there are countless women who have had abortions who've been lifelong Catholics who then felt ostracized from their congregations.

ARCHBISHOP LORI: And that should never happen. This is not about ostracizing. This is not about condemning. This is about loving. This is about compassion. And this is about helping women either who are contemplating an abortion or those who have had an abortion to move forward in hope and in a better way.