

CATHOLICS  
FOR  
CHOICE



IN GOOD CONSCIENCE



AT CATHOLICS FOR CHOICE,  
WE **IMAGINE** A WORLD

*Where* all women and men are trusted to make moral decisions about their lives.

*Where* the decision to start a family is thoughtful and planned.

*Where* policy makers and advocates are free to support policies that create a more just and compassionate society.

*Where* life-saving health interventions aren't blocked by sectarian interests.

*Where* abortion is safe, legal and truly accessible, and both contraception and child care are available and affordable.

## WE LIVE IN A WORLD

*Where* abortion remains illegal or unavailable for millions of women around the world, even when it could save their lives.

*Where* a woman who needs emergency contraception at a hospital or pharmacy is denied because of the religious beliefs of the pharmacists behind the counter, or the nurse in the emergency room.

*Where* policy makers are ostracized in their churches and harassed by their clergy because of their support for sex education or reproductive health care for poor women.

*Where* a rape survivor in a war-torn country can be told by the Vatican that she must continue the pregnancy that resulted from her attack.

*Where* more than 40 million people live with HIV and AIDS while the Vatican lobbies against the use of condoms.

In all parts of the world, women, men and their families suffer because they lack the resources to plan their families, and the comprehensive information and education to keep themselves safe and healthy.

**The Catholic hierarchy's powerful lobby plays a huge role in influencing public policy and affects everyone — Catholic or not — by limiting the availability of reproductive health-care services worldwide.**

The Catholic hierarchy's ban on contraception and abortion has a disastrous impact on women's lives, especially the lives of poor women who may rely solely on government-run programs for access to reproductive health-care services. It is women and their families who pay the price every time theocracy trumps democracy in the debate over women's health care.



# CATHOLICS FOR CHOICE

At CFC, we strive to be an expression of Catholicism as it is lived by ordinary people. We are part of the great majority of the faithful in the Catholic church who disagrees with the dictates of the Vatican on matters related to sex, marriage, family life and motherhood. We are part of the great majority who believes that Catholic teachings on conscience mean that every individual must follow his or her own conscience—and respect others' right to do the same. At Catholics for Choice, **we believe** that this is the world where the meaning of choice can truly be realized.

**We believe** that change happens through dialogue and an exchange of information, through communicating ideas and values.

**We believe** that change happens when we take courageous and strategic risks.

**We know** that change happens when we challenge well-established and unquestioned authority and enable people to hear new ideas and embrace new ways of thinking.

## **Through**

- **Discourse**
- **Education**
- **Research**
- **Advocacy**

## **On Issues of**

- **Abortion & Contraception**
- **HIV & AIDS**
- **Sex & Sexuality**
- **New Reproductive Health Technologies**
- **Religion in Public Policy**

**Catholics for Choice's mission** is to shape and advance sexual and reproductive ethics that are based on justice, reflect a commitment to women's well-being and respect and affirm the capacity of women and men to make moral decisions about their lives. CFC works in the United States and internationally to ensure that all people have access to safe and affordable reproductive health-care services and to infuse our core values into public policy, community life and Catholic social thinking and teaching.

Catholics for Choice is at the forefront of national and international debates on the intersection of faith, women's health and reproductive justice. *CFC is committed not only to policy change, but also to a change in the culture in which policy decisions are made, a change in people's hearts and minds about the ways they think about sexuality and reproduction.*

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## WHAT WE DO

Called upon time and again for **information, advice and skills building**, Catholics for Choice helps people and organizations confidently challenge the power of the Catholic hierarchy which uses every means at its disposal to punish and publicly shame Catholics who don't unquestioningly follow its edicts. The hierarchy also seeks to impose its narrow view of morality—and dangerous positions on public health issues—on Catholics and non-Catholics around the world.

### ABORTION & CONTRACEPTION

Catholics for Choice believes in a world where everyone has equal access to the full range of reproductive health-care services—including access to safe and legal abortion services and affordable and reliable forms of contraception. CFC works to change the conversation regarding sexual and reproductive rights to one where the individual conscience of each person is recognized as the keystone of moral decision making. **CFC works to ensure reproductive health and rights for all women by:**

*CHANGING* the way that policy makers, advocates and providers think and feel about reproductive rights and articulate their message to advance sound reproductive health policies.

*FACILITATING* global strategies for improving sexual and reproductive health and rights and *organizing* opposition to political threats to those rights.

*ASSISTING* on-the-ground advocates through technical and financial assistance to our partners in Latin America, Católicas por el Derecho a Decidir, and allied groups throughout the Caribbean, Europe and North America.

*INCREASING* commitment to preventing unintended pregnancy by promoting access to contraception and assistance to women who choose to continue their pregnancies—including through our **Prevention Not Prohibition** campaign—and *responding* to efforts by religious conservatives to block access to safe and reliable reproductive health-care services.

## HIV & AIDS

Catholics for Choice believes in a world where all people can protect themselves and their partners from the transmission of HIV by using condoms. The Catholic hierarchy is the most vocal critic of condom use. It bans condom use for Catholics, refuses to provide condoms as a part of reproductive health care in Catholic-controlled hospitals and clinics, and lobbies governments against providing condoms as part of international aid. The hierarchy's conservative lobby has dire effects in countries least-equipped to deal with HIV and AIDS both economically and medically. **CFC works to prevent the transmission of HIV and advance sexual health by:**

*COUNTERING* the Vatican's ban on condoms through the **Condoms4Life** campaign, which spreads the message that good Catholics use condoms as a way to protect themselves and their partners.

*REACHING OUT* to policy makers and advocates in the US and internationally to promote initiatives that advocate the use of condoms as a method to prevent the transmission of HIV.

*PROVIDING* a faith-based perspective that promotes an alternative and authentic view of Catholic teachings on condoms.

## SEX & SEXUALITY

Catholics for Choice respects and affirms the personal autonomy of all people in regard to sexuality. CFC works to counter the impact of negative sex messages from the Vatican and to promote a holistic approach to sex and sexuality. **CFC promotes an honest conversation about sex that is grounded in the realities of real Catholic people by:**

*QUESTIONING* the teachings about sex and sexuality in Catholic history and tradition.

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*PROMOTING* positive and healthy messages about sexuality.

*CONFRONTING* the Vatican's rhetoric on sex and sexuality and its teachings on the value and role of women in relationships and in society.

*SUPPORTING* evidence-based, comprehensive sexuality education policies that enable people to feel confident about themselves, their partners and their sexuality.

### **NEW REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH TECHNOLOGIES**

Catholics for Choice believes that public policy should be formed on sound science and evidence-based practice, especially in regard to reproductive health care. While Catholic bishops argue against the use of reproductive health technologies, CFC believes that advances in these technologies should be encouraged, and that individuals should be allowed to make decisions based on their own consciences. **CFC works to encourage an evidence-based approach to reproductive health care by:**

*PROMOTING* scientific inquiry and advances in reproductive health technologies.

*SUPPORTING* the right of all women to choose from a full range of reproductive health services, provided to all—regardless of ability to pay—in surroundings that are safe, legal and professionally staffed.

*COUNTERING* the bishops' efforts to block access to reproductive health services in Catholic hospitals and their attempts to lobby governments against scientific advances and service provision.

## RELIGION IN PUBLIC POLICY

Catholics for Choice believes voices of religion and religious traditions are an important part of public discourse. CFC believes in a world where all voices, the voices of the religious and of the secular, of Catholics and non-Catholics alike, are heard throughout public policy discussions. **CFC works to ensure an appropriate role for religion in public life through:**

*DEFENDING* prochoice Catholic policy makers who come under attack from the Vatican and conservative Catholics when they stand up for the needs of women—and the wishes of their constituents—in support of comprehensive reproductive health-care services.

*PROMOTING* discourse on the role of religion in public policy at the European Parliament, in Latin America and at the state and federal levels in the US by *convening* public debates with policy makers on the growing tensions over the role of religion in public policy.

*COUNTERING* the disproportionate weight that the views of the Vatican are given in policy making by campaigning against its special status at the United Nations and in other political systems.

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## ON ALL THESE ISSUES

*Catholics for Choice provides the most effective counterpoint to the vocal, well-financed and powerful Roman Catholic hierarchy, which presents itself as the sole moral arbiter on matters where sexuality and reproduction intersect with religion and faith. We work to strengthen our partners' and colleagues' efforts by sharing our skills and learning from each others' successes and limitations. CFC is the only organization with the knowledge, expertise, strategic sense and courage to meet the very real threats resulting from the inappropriate role the Vatican tries to play in public policy.*

*Catholics for Choice seeks to engage all sectors of culture and society in ways that are meaningful to each. We strive to represent the voice and vision of Catholics and change the tone of the debate on reproductive health.*

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# CATHOLICS FOR CHOICE

## **INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS**

Católicas por el Derecho a Decidir  
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Católicas por el Derecho a Decidir  
*Córdoba, Argentina*

Católicas por el Derecho a Decidir  
*La Paz, Bolivia*

Católicas pelo Direito de Decidir  
*São Paulo, Brasil*

Catholics for Choice Canada  
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*Frankfurt, Germany*

Católicas por el Derecho a Decidir  
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Católicas por el Derecho a Decidir  
*Managua, Nicaragua*

Católicas por el Derecho a Decidir  
*Asunción, Paraguay*

## **EUROPEAN ADVISORY GROUP**

Henk Baars  
Frans AJ Baneke  
Susana Cruzalta Aguirre  
Gail Grossman Freyne  
Anna (Anka) Grzywacz  
Elfriede Harth  
Chini Rueda Sabater  
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Catholics for Choice  
1436 U Street NW, Suite 301  
Washington, DC 20009, USA  
T: +1 (202) 986-6093  
F: +1 (202) 332-7995  
[cfc@CatholicsForChoice.org](mailto:cfc@CatholicsForChoice.org)  
[www.CatholicsForChoice.org](http://www.CatholicsForChoice.org)

