Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

As we know all too well, Governor Andrew Cuomo of New York recently signed into law legislation that permitted abortion in his state up until the very moment of birth. Unfortunately, Colorado passed identical legislation more than 50 years ago.

Many of the Catholic faithful of this diocese and many others throughout the country have expressed their righteous indignation in the face of such horrendous legislation. I have received more than a few letters and emails in this vein. While understandable, many of these communications contain misunderstandings that call for correction.

1. Perhaps the most serious misunderstanding is the inference that I am less than solidly pro-life. I have consistently and forcefully made known publically the teaching of the Church regarding abortion—a teaching that I have always stood by during my years in Colorado and long before that. I have made it clearly known that any politician that supports abortion of any kind may not receive Holy Communion in this diocese (spiritual excommunication).

2. Some have called upon me to administer the canonical penalty of excommunication against Governor Cuomo. Only the Holy Father or the governor's proper bishop may do this. I am not privy to the pope's thoughts in this matter, but Cardinal Dolan has issued very strong denunciations of the New York legislation, as well as the governor himself. It is easy to find the cardinal's statements on line—including his reasons for not imposing canonical excommunication. For some time now Governor Cuomo has acceded to Cardinal Dolan's request that he not receive Holy Communion. This prohibition does not seem to be of any concern to the governor, so one must wonder if canonical excommunication would make any difference to him.

3. While a great deal of anger has been expressed toward me, toward Cardinal Dolan, toward the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and toward Governor Cuomo, I would like to suggest that the energy that it takes to simply be angry be used for much serious prayer and advocacy for an end to abortion in our country. It is, in my opinion, a far more effective use of time and energy.

Governor Cuomo's outrageous support and celebration of late-term abortion is objectively mortally sinful. He is certainly jeopardizing his own salvation, and is likely leading many others in the same direction. All such pro-abortion politicians—especially those who claim to be Catholic—need our prayers. And we all have a lot of work to do to eliminate this kind of legislation in our country.

Please pray for the pre-born children, that they will have the opportunity to live lives in praise of the God who created them in his image and likeness. And please pray for me.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Michael J. Sheridan
Bishop of Colorado Springs