



FLORIDA CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

The nonpartisan public policy voice of the Catholic Church in Florida

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Statement of the Catholic Bishops of Florida on the 46th Anniversary of *Roe v. Wade* January 22, 2019

“So great is the value of a human life, and so inalienable the right to life of an innocent child growing in the mother’s womb, that no alleged right to one’s own body can justify a decision to terminate that life, which is an end in itself and which can never be considered the ‘property’ of another human being.”
- Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, no. 83

On this annual Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children, we pray that the Lord enlighten the eyes of our hearts and lead our nation out of the darkness of the decision to legalize abortion 46 years ago. On this anniversary, we pray for those whom we will never know, and we pray for their mothers and fathers who have suffered this loss. We pray for each other that our enlightenment will lead us to honor the sacredness of each life, given to us by God for God.

However, we are encouraged by having celebrated this last year another anniversary – that of *Humanae Vitae* – and the canonization of its author, Saint Pope Paul VI. This prophetic encyclical shook the world 50 years ago with its countercultural instruction rejecting artificial contraception and welcoming children as gifts from God that are part of married love. Yet, today, growing numbers of women of all faiths and no faith are rejecting artificial contraception and realizing that fertility is not a disease to be “treated.” Rather, spouses are discovering natural family planning as it promotes healthy reproduction, healthy relationships, and a healthy environment.

Similarly, we are convinced that the Church’s teaching on abortion is continuously proving to be prophetic. Our nation is increasingly rejecting abortion and *Roe v. Wade* as states continue to adopt more limitations on abortion and expand alternatives to abortion. During the 2018 legislative session, the people of God and others of good will, through the Florida Conference of Catholic Bishops, advocated for the addition of the Florida Pregnancy Care Network to Florida statutes. This legislation better positions a network of over 100 pregnancy support centers across our state to support women who choose life for their unborn children, even when facing an unplanned pregnancy.

Yet, there is still much work to be done. We are appalled at the current “assembly line” approach by abortionists to the irreversible decision of the mother for her and the defenseless child within her womb. While physicians ensure patients are fully informed prior to other serious medical procedures, Florida courts invoked the right to privacy in our state constitution to block a good law requiring a 24-hour reflection period prior to abortion, pending appeal.

The court’s broad interpretation of our state’s privacy clause stems from a Florida Supreme Court ruling in 1989 against a law requiring parental consent prior to a minor’s abortion and poses unique challenges regarding abortion laws in Florida. We advocate for the reconsideration of these decisions, and we remain hopeful that the courts will ultimately protect women in Florida from the predatory practices of the abortion industry. Otherwise, even if *Roe v. Wade* were overturned, the state of Florida could retain permissive abortion policies.

We join together today renewing our cry for an end to everything which denies the sacredness of life, including the unacceptable judicial decision in *Roe v. Wade* and the interpretation of Florida’s privacy clause favoring abortion. We ask God to help us to protect unborn children and their families, and to grant wisdom and courage for those in elected office. May our Lord Jesus Christ enlighten the eyes of our hearts, that we may recognize that devaluing the most innocent and vulnerable life leads to a coarseness and callousness towards one another and all life.

Most Reverend Thomas G. Wenski
Archdiocese of Miami

Most Reverend Gerald M. Barbarito
Diocese of Palm Beach

Most Reverend Frank J. Dewane
Diocese of Venice

Most Reverend John G. Noonan
Diocese of Orlando

Most Reverend Felipe J. Estévez
Diocese of St. Augustine

Most Reverend Gregory L. Parkes
Diocese of St. Petersburg

Most Reverend William A. Wack, C.S.C.
Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee

Most Reverend Peter Baldacchino
Archdiocese of Miami

Most Reverend Enrique E. Delgado
Archdiocese of Miami