



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 41st Anniversary of *Roe v. Wade* January 22, 2014

“Every child who, rather than being born, is condemned unjustly to being aborted, bears the face of Jesus Christ, bears the face of the Lord, who even before he was born, and then just after birth, experienced the world’s rejection.” (Pope Francis, September 2013)

On January 22, 1973, the U.S. Supreme Court legalized the termination of life in the womb, radically altering our country’s discourse regarding the fundamental human right to live. Since then, an estimated 55 million unborn children have been deprived of life in the United States alone. We, nevertheless, **“rejoice in hope, endure in affliction, persevere in prayer,”** as Paul instructed in his letter to the Romans. (cf. Romans 12:12)

We rejoice in hope as the number of abortions performed in Florida continues to decline every year. Close to 20,000 fewer abortions took place in our state in 2012 than did in 2006. We rejoice in hope while strides are made such as on June 5, 2013, when Governor Scott signed a bill into law that provides an infant born alive during an attempted abortion with the same rights, powers, and privileges as any other child born alive. The active involvement of our young in protecting the unborn is also a great hope to us.

We endure in affliction as we work and pray to overcome the high court’s far-reaching decision that has remained a scourge on our society, profoundly impacting the medical profession, the legal profession, the media, and through them, all people. This unjust ruling has perpetuated the intrinsic evil of killing the unborn child. As we endure, we will not rest in our efforts until the day when the unborn child achieves full legal recognition and protection of law, from the moment of conception.

We persevere in prayer for the mothers and fathers of the 76,138 unborn children who were aborted in our state in 2012. We persevere in prayer that the pregnant mothers in Florida who consider abortion may find their way to crisis pregnancy centers that will remind them of the truth and beauty of the gift from God in their womb, and support them in their time of need. We persevere in prayer for the healing and pastoral care of post-abortive mothers and fathers through ministries such as Project Rachel.

Pope Francis, addressing the International Federation of Catholic Medical Associations in September 2013, proclaimed, “A widespread mentality of the useful, the ‘culture of waste’ that today enslaves the hearts and minds of so many, comes at a very high cost: it asks for the elimination of human beings, especially if they are physically or socially weaker. Our response to this mentality is a decisive and unreserved ‘yes’ to life.”

May we accept our Holy Father’s challenge to protect life at all stages and see the face of our Lord in the unborn.

Most Reverend Thomas G. Wenski
Archdiocese of Miami

Most Reverend Gerald M. Barbarito
Diocese of Palm Beach

Most Reverend Robert N. Lynch
Diocese of St. Petersburg

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 Pensacola-Tallahassee