



# FLORIDA CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

*The nonpartisan public policy voice of the Catholic Church in Florida*

201 West Park Avenue, Tallahassee, Florida 32301-7715 \* (850) 205-6820 \* [www.flaccb.org](http://www.flaccb.org)

## Statement of the Catholic Bishops of Florida on the 43rd Anniversary of *Roe v. Wade* January 22, 2016

*"...protect and defend human life at every stage of its development."*

*Pope Francis, in his address to a joint session of the United States Congress, September 24, 2015*

We are saddened by yet another anniversary of the tragic U.S. Supreme Court decision legalizing the abortion of unborn children as we profoundly mourn over 57 million lives that have consequently been lost.

During this last year, courageous lawmakers sought to reduce the evil of abortion in our state by advancing legislation establishing a reflection period prior to abortion so every woman may more fully consider the decision to abort an unborn child. We were deeply moved by the post-abortive women who came forward in every legislative committee hearing to reveal years of regret and deep wounds they have lived with as the result of terminating a pregnancy. Their courage and willingness to shed light on the evil of abortion is commendable and reminds us of the unassuming, yet life-changing, work of our post-abortive ministries who invite the many men and women harmed by abortion to a process of healing and spiritual restoration. The judicial challenge to this law, however, reaffirms the considerable work that remains ahead as a "privacy clause" in our state's constitution has been interpreted by the courts as uniquely granting greater abortion rights than the U.S. Constitution.

Recent attention to the allegations of illegal selling of fetal tissue has confirmed what we have said for many years: abortion is evil. We call for the government subsidies that fund our nation's abortion providers to be reallocated to community health centers and other federally qualified health centers that do not promote or perform abortions.

Pope Francis has frequently admonished us against a "throwaway culture." The Holy Father has reminded us in his latest encyclical, *Laudato Si*, that all life is interrelated. To call ourselves unequivocally pro-life requires that we always choose life, even when it most challenges us: whether encountering an unplanned pregnancy, ill and dying loved ones, the execution of a convicted criminal, or the stranger seeking refuge in our communities. Recognizing we often fall short of this great task, we are jubilant that this Year of Mercy, called for by Pope Francis, invites us to seek forgiveness and find peace through the miracle of God's infinite and inexplicable mercy.

While we lament the 43rd anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Roe vs. Wade*, we are also encouraged by the commemoration of a different anniversary. On the 450th anniversary of the founding of St. Augustine, Catholic Floridians proudly celebrated the establishment of our nation's earliest Catholic parish which first sowed the seeds of our faith on this land with a special devotion to our Blessed Mother, still echoed at the shrine of Our Lady of La Leche y Buen Parto. In these last four and a half centuries, our faith has served as witness to the Good News of Jesus Christ through the greatest of adversities. We invite the Catholic faithful to renew their commitment of proclaiming the Gospel throughout our land and consecrate our continued work of protecting the unborn to the motherly heart of Our Lady.

**Most Reverend Thomas G. Wenski**  
Archdiocese of Miami

**Most Reverend Robert N. Lynch**  
Diocese of St. Petersburg

**Most Reverend John G. Noonan**  
Diocese of Orlando

**Most Reverend Gregory L. Parkes**  
Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee

**Most Reverend Gerald M. Barbarito**  
Diocese of Palm Beach

**Most Reverend Frank J. Dewane**  
Diocese of Venice

**Most Reverend Felipe J. Estévez**  
Diocese of St. Augustine

**Most Reverend Peter Baldacchino**  
Archdiocese of Miami