



FLORIDA CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

The nonpartisan public policy voice of the Catholic Church in Florida

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Renewed Call to a Culture of Life on the Tragic Anniversary of *Roe v. Wade*: A Statement of the Catholic Bishops of Florida

January 22, 2020

Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children

January 22, 2020 marks a sad anniversary: the U.S. Supreme Court's tragic decision legalizing the deliberate taking of unborn human life through elective abortion. Judicial sanction of the termination of life in the womb seen by some as a "right" is a "wrong" that for 47 years has coarsened hearts and darkened minds. Today, after more than 60 million abortions, there is less regard for all human life as society discards those deemed inconvenient because of age, infirmity or any other reason.

This past year, in one of the most polarized political environments experienced in recent history, we were appalled that some states sought to strengthen laws that permit abortions even to the moment of birth. We also saw the U.S. Congress fail repeatedly to consider protections that ensure infants who survive abortion receive proper medical care.

Yet, amid this darkness, signs of hope remain, and good and courageous acts light a way forward. The passage of laws by several state legislatures to restrict abortion is encouraging. Wide support in Florida for the vital help provided to pregnant women and their families by pregnancy care centers is greatly welcomed. Parish and other ministries that provide material and spiritual help and offer hope and healing for those suffering from past abortions hearten us and are to be commended.

The prevailing interpretation of the privacy clause in our Florida constitution, which has provided broader rights to abortion than the U.S. Constitution, is frustrating. Nevertheless, we are hopeful that legislation requiring a 24-hour reflection period prior to an abortion will ultimately survive court challenges and be upheld as law.

Despite the claims by some that *Roe v. Wade* is "settled law", Americans are still conflicted about abortion, and this is what lies behind much of the divisiveness of today's political discourse. As Catholics, we do not pretend to impose our views about human life on the citizenry of this great nation. Nevertheless, as Americans, we wish to contribute, as faithful and faith-filled citizens, to the common good and to promote human flourishing in our society by making our proposal. Dr. Martin Luther King's proposal on the need for racial justice touched the conscience of a nation and brought about the end of Jim Crow. In the same way, our proposal informed by Catholic teachings but accessible to reason hopes to touch consciences and bring an end to America's "slaughter of the innocents".

This proposal holds that everyone's human dignity is served when each human life is protected in law from the moment of conception until natural death. Respect for the right to life and dignity of every human person – whether he or she be poor, an immigrant, a refugee, incarcerated, infirmed, sick, elderly or unborn – simply reaffirms the self-evident truth that "all men are created equal" and "endowed by the Creator with certain unalienable rights" and thus promotes the "more perfect union" to which our founders aspired.

Most Rev. Thomas G. Wenski
Archdiocese of Miami

Most Rev. Gerald M. Barbarito
Diocese of Palm Beach

Most Rev. Frank J. Dewane
Diocese of Venice

Most Rev. John G. Noonan
Diocese of Orlando

Most Rev. Felipe J. Estévez
Diocese of St. Augustine

Most Rev. Gregory L. Parkes
Diocese of St. Petersburg

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

Most Rev. Enrique E. Delgado
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