



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) 222-3803 * www.flaccb.org

Responding to the Challenge of Abortion in Florida on the Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Life: A Statement of the Catholic Bishops of Florida January 22, 2021

The Supreme Court's 1973 *Roe v. Wade* ruling usurped the proper role of legislators and imposed an extreme abortion regime that has contributed to the polarization that has divided us as a nation and further wounded our society by ending over 61 million lives. Its trauma affects the web of social relationships that form families and society. Disregard for unborn life too often has poisoned political discourse and coarsened our mutual respect. It also undermines our appreciation for the value of every person, especially those who are vulnerable.

The January 6 invasion of the U.S. Capitol by lawbreaking rioters shocked and upset all Americans. Hopefully this sad event will only be a footnote in history of our nation's democracy. If we are to escape the benighted tribalism of those blinded by outrage, we need to move beyond this polarization.

We applaud policy efforts in Congress and in our state legislature to mitigate harm from wrongly decided court rulings that paved the way to abortion even to hours before birth. Thus, here in Florida, we are grateful for Senator Kelli Stargel's and Representative Erin Grall's leadership in passing legislation that requires parental consent before a minor can have an abortion. For over thirty years, the shadow of the *In Re: TW* case, invalidating a previous parental consent law, has hung over Florida. We are relieved that this common-sense measure has been restored in law.

At the same time, late-term abortions are disproportionately taking place in Florida. Over 900 abortions after 20 weeks gestation were reported in 2019. We anticipate supporting bills to prohibit abortion after 20 weeks gestation, since research shows that unborn children have the capacity to feel pain. As we work for the day that abortion is no longer legal – or conceivable – we will support such incremental improvements in the law that limit abortion's harms. As Catholics and as citizens, we will continue to make our proposals on the right to life and dignity of every human being from conception to natural death. Trusting in the power of the truth to prevail, we commit ourselves to dialogue in good faith with all our fellow citizens.

During this COVID-19 pandemic, the world's attention has understandably turned to vaccine development. We are grateful that vaccines have been developed at "warp speed," and we encourage everyone, especially those who are vulnerable or risk exposing the vulnerable to infection, be vaccinated when the vaccines are available to them. The vaccines currently being used are not ethically or morally problematic.^{1,2}

The last year has been filled with unique challenges for many members of our community, particularly women facing unplanned pregnancies. It heartens us that people of goodwill from our parishes are participating in the Walking with Moms in Need initiative of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, which invites us to serve pregnant women and their families through pregnancy resource centers within our communities. Our vision for an ever more robust culture of life includes support for women in choosing life for their unborn children and assistance to parents in caring for their children with access to just wages, affordable housing, and health care. While abortion is a preeminent priority, we cannot dismiss or ignore other serious threats to human life.

Our prayers and our ministries are here to accompany mothers and others experiencing difficulties. Throughout Scripture, we see that crises purified individuals and communities. May these current trials reawaken our state and our country to an increased awareness of the value of the gift of human life and promote genuine solidarity.

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
Archdiocese of Miami

¹ [U.S. Bishop Chairmen for Pro-Life and Doctrine Address Ethical Concerns on the New COVID-19 Vaccines, December 14, 2020.](#)

² [Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Note on the morality of using some anti-Covid-19 vaccines, no. 3, December 21, 2020.](#)