



Florida Catholic Conference

The nonpartisan public policy voice of the Catholic Bishops of Florida

201 West Park Avenue, Tallahassee, Florida 32301-7715 * (850) 205-6820 * www.flacathconf.org

Statement of the Catholic Bishops of Florida on the 39th Anniversary of *Roe v. Wade* January 22, 2012

While we are saddened that another year passes without our nation redressing the great wrong of *Roe v. Wade*, which made abortion legal at any time before birth, we are encouraged by the actions of the 2011 Florida legislature that passed a record number of bills regulating abortion practices. For the fourth year in a row, the number of abortions in Florida has declined. These ongoing efforts of pro-life legislators have also been aided by the presence of men, women and children of faith praying in front of abortion clinics and assisting those who chose life as the result of these encounters.

Many crisis pregnancy centers now have ultrasound machines which reveal to a woman the truth and beauty of the unique individual created in her womb, a gift from God. As the woman in 2 Maccabees 7:1, 22, 23 eloquently speaks: "It was not I who gave you the breath of life, nor was it I who set in order the elements of which each of you is composed....it is the Creator of the universe who shapes each man's beginning, as he brings about the origin of everything."

Throughout Florida, these centers are instrumental in providing physical and emotional support to vulnerable women who are counseled regarding their life situation and assisted whether they choose to parent or place their child for adoption. The Catholic Church continues its pledge of support to pregnant women and children in their time of need.

As shepherds of the faithful, we offer pastoral care through Project Rachel and Rachel's Vineyard, nationally recognized confidential programs approved by the Catholic Church, to women, men and family members affected by procured abortion (**TOLL FREE 888-456-4673** <http://hopeafterabortion.org>). Those who have suffered because of the choices they regret should not despair because God's mercy heals all wounds, even those sins we may consider "unforgiveable."

Recent polling shows 50% favor a law requiring women seeking an abortion to be shown an ultrasound image of her fetus at least 24 hours before the procedure. Legislation filed for 2012 includes a 24 hour waiting period and would be one more step toward providing women all the information necessary for an informed decision before committing to a life altering abortion.

In an address to the Pontifical Academy for Life at the Vatican in February, 2011, Pope Benedict XVI said, "In the moral conscience, God speaks to each one and invites him to defend human life at all time. In this personal bond with the Creator lies the profound dignity of the moral conscience and the reason for its inviolability."

May we never rest until laws violating the right to life are overturned or set aside and we ask people of good will to join us in prayer for the protection of all life from conception to natural death.

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 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 Thomas G. Wenski
Apostolic Administrator
Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee