FLORIDA CATHOLIC CONFERENCE
Advocating Life, Dignity and the Common Good Since 1969
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Statement of the Catholic Bishops of Florida
on the 42nd Anniversary of *Roe v. Wade*
January 22, 2015

Even as we lament the Supreme Court ruling on *Roe v. Wade* that deprives the most vulnerable members of our society their fundamental right to life, we are heartened by the recent progress made towards the protection of the unborn child. We profoundly mourn the over 56 million unborn victims since the court's 1973 decision, yet are encouraged by the decline in the number of abortions in Florida each year. Often in the face of great opposition, new pro-life laws are passed and pregnancy centers across our state continue to provide counseling and support for mothers in need. We also remain hopeful as we witness, through the efforts of parish and diocesan ministries, those who experience a conversion of heart and come to treasure the unborn child.

By its legal acceptance, abortion dehumanizes the unborn child and contributes to what Pope Francis has called a "throwaway culture" that does not view life as a gift but as a dispensable object only of value when useful to us. As a result, those populations who are most vulnerable outside the womb are also most vulnerable inside the womb. However, all human life, whether in- or outside the womb, is sacred. One's worth cannot be determined by gender, race, health, age or financial status.

Too often behind an abortion is a story of a woman who feels terminating the life of her unborn child is her only option; she does not believe she has a choice. It is a decision void of authentic freedom built on fear and vulnerability. When faced with an unplanned pregnancy, adoption is a beautiful life-giving alternative. This "yes" to life is an act of love that demonstrates the great courage and hope of a birthmother and the generosity of the adoptive parents.

Each abortion affects not only a woman who may be suffering, but involves a man who may be experiencing grief and guilt. Jesus Christ longs to extend his abundant mercy and love to these women and men, and the Church is here to assist them both in the process of healing and finding this peace. The reconciliation that so many experience is a source of joy.

As Saint John Paul II urged, we must continually work to spread the culture of life. In 2014, two bills were signed into law to protect unborn children in Florida. One restricts abortion after viability, which limits abortions performed on children able to survive outside of the womb. Additionally, the Unborn Victims of Violence Act (UVVA) provides that an act of violence which causes injury or death to the unborn is a criminal offense separate from the offense against the mother. While UVVA does not restrict abortion, it recognizes the inherent value of unborn children from conception and provides added protection for their mothers.

As we remain encouraged by the progress made to protect the unborn child, we must, and will, continue to fight for life always to triumph over death.

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