



**Statement of the Catholic Bishops of Florida
On the 30th Anniversary of *Roe v Wade*
January 22, 2003**

"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I dedicated you..." Jeremiah 1:5

This is the thirtieth anniversary of the infamous United States Supreme Court decisions in *Roe v. Wade* and *Doe v. Bolton*, rulings which we have often condemned. These decisions removed protection of law from every child before birth. In *Stenberg v. Carhart*, the court struck down a law against partial birth abortion that sought to protect a child in the process of being born. Over 40 million children have been aborted in this country under these decisions; in Florida alone over 85,000 abortions occurred last year. With a live birth rate of 205,800 in 2001, almost one-third of the potential population was destroyed in the womb.

Generations have grown up in a society that accepts abortion as a way of life. Yet we are encouraged by signs that this younger generation expresses a deeper appreciation for the life of all, including the unborn. We are confident that continuing efforts to change laws, as well as moral and social values, will eventually reverse these bad decisions.

We salute the dedicated men and women who, in the last three decades, have worked to provide resources so that no woman feels forced into an abortion because of lack of housing, medical care or shelter. The evolution of ultrasound machines, which are turning pregnancy centers into medical clinics, has provided the proof to abortion minded women that the life within them is not just a "blob of tissue". We praise and thank birth mothers for their courage and fidelity to life, as well as the many people of good will who have counseled women facing difficult pregnancies to choose life, and those who have lobbied and prayed for the cause tirelessly since 1973.

We extend an offer of assistance to anyone considering abortion because of lack of emotional or financial support, medical care, shelter, or any other needs. Inspired by the word and example of Jesus Christ, the Church will help you with caring compassion and without condemnation.

Our prayers and empathy are extended to the many women who were deceived by the claim that abortion would solve their problems. In fact, it has created physical, emotional and spiritual harm. Through counseling and reconciliation programs, such as Project Rachel, there is opportunity for forgiveness and healing, not only for the women who have suffered, but for men and others who supported the abortion or made no attempt to intervene.

As Christians, we are all called to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit those in prison, and to serve the least of our brothers and sisters. Due to these decisions 30 years ago, the unborn child is the least, the most defenseless, the most vulnerable today. The great challenge we face is to bring this great nation back to it's founding principles, the first of which is we are all created equal, endowed by our Creator with certain inalienable rights, especially the right to life.

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