



Statement of the Catholic Bishops of Florida on the 32nd Anniversary of Roe v. Wade

January 22, 2005 marks the 32nd anniversary of the United States Supreme Court decisions in *Roe v. Wade* and *Doe v. Bolton*, decisions we have long condemned and will not forget. Together they removed protection of law from the unborn and launched an unprecedented attack on mothers and children in this country. Now, more than 40 million children have been removed from our society as a result of this evil. Particularly disconcerting is that the numbers of abortions in Florida have exceeded 80,000 in each of the past ten years, rising to more than 88,000 in 2004, while across the country the numbers of abortions are declining.

Abortion on demand remains our nation's legal policy because these 1973 Supreme Court decisions that legalized abortion throughout pregnancy have not been overturned. Because of those decisions, many citizens believe that women have a moral right to abort their unborn children. Our nation witnessed another unjust decision from our highest court in the case of *Dred Scot*, which similarly deprived African-Americans of the protection of law. Just as that deplorable decision has been overcome, the ongoing efforts of many Americans to restore protection for unborn children will one day bear fruit.

As leaders of the Catholic community in Florida, we acknowledge our right and responsibility to help establish laws and social policies protecting the right to life of unborn children, providing care and services for women and children, and safeguarding human life at every stage and in every circumstance. At this particular time, abortion has become the fundamental human rights issue for all men and women of good will.

We lament the position of public officials who support the abortion culture by their refusal to “bring personal moral convictions to bear” when they have the power to limit or end abortion. We ask, “Is not the law a ‘moral’ concern?” Certainly, all laws create a shared social moral code. We urge action by elected and appointed officials that will always protect and enhance human life.

On this sad anniversary, we commend those who choose life even in difficult situations. We affirm all people of good will who sacrifice so much of themselves to encourage women to choose life, who assist families to choose life, and who counsel women facing difficult pregnancies. We are encouraged at the increase in the parish based Project Gabriel program, which walks with women on their journey through pregnancy and delivery. We are also pleased that Project Rachel, geared especially to mediate healing for those affected by abortion and its painful aftermath, is now expanded across the state.

Each of us is called to pray for those who have chosen abortion as well as for those who have pressured them to do so. Each of us is a sinner, but no one is beyond the saving power of the Lord. The doors of our churches remain open to all who may need assistance and we pledge to reach out to those who suffer from painful abortion experiences, to share with them God's love and mercy.

Every human life, at every stage of development, is a gift from God. We pledge our continued defense of this truth and our continued effort and prayer that *Roe v. Wade* will one day be overcome.

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