



Statement of the Catholic Bishops of Florida on the 35th Anniversary of *Roe v. Wade* January 22, 2008

"...and from man in regard to his fellow man I will demand an accounting for human life." Genesis 9:5

We must continue to proclaim to society that the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* Supreme Court ruling was wrong because it did not recognize the child in the womb as a human being but only as a "potentiality of human life". In civilized society, all members must respect the fundamental rights of every person. Calling abortion a "deep wound" in society, Pope Benedict XVI noted, "The fundamental human right, the presupposition of every other right, is the right to life itself. This is true of life from the moment of conception until its natural end. Abortion, consequently, cannot be a human right – it is the very opposite."

Sadly, abortions in Florida continue to increase, surpassing the numbers recorded just five years ago in 2001 by 10,000, with a new high of almost 96,000 abortions in 2006. The failure of the legislature to strengthen the parental notification law is particularly disturbing in the face of judicial criticism lamenting the lack of standards in the law. The testimony of parents was all in vain, as they described their families shattered by teens who later regretted their hasty decision. Across our nation, almost 50 million human beings have been destroyed in the womb since 1973, dying in ways we would not tolerate if done in the light of day.

While abortion continues to be the law of the land, we are heartened by medical and scientific advances that have opened the window to the womb such as ultrasound, allowing the mother to see her child made in the image and likeness of God. What has been called "choice" for a woman has so often been no choice because of coercion by others, feeling alone or lack of financial resources.

Thanks to countless volunteers at crisis pregnancy centers around the state and to Project Gabriel, a parish based program that offers emotional and physical help, women are making a choice for life! We reaffirm our commitment to help any woman who needs assistance to continue her pregnancy and give birth.

Hope is on the horizon as the United States Supreme Court upheld the federal ban on partial birth abortion this year, thus acknowledging the humanity of the unborn child and the post-abortion grief experienced by countless women. Through Project Rachel and Rachel's Vineyard, the Church continues to offer healing and reconciliation to women and men who have participated in abortion.

We pray for the day the federal court will overturn their previous rulings and return this issue to the states, triggering laws in some that have passed legislation in anticipation and opening the door for other states to pass abortion bans. While some progress has been achieved, we cannot rest until all life at all stages is respected and celebrated.

Archbishop John C. Favalora
Archdiocese of Miami

Bishop Victor Galeone
Diocese of St. Augustine

Bishop Robert N. Lynch
Diocese of St. Petersburg

Bishop Thomas G. Wenski
Diocese of Orlando

Bishop John H. Ricard, SSJ
Diocese of Pensacola/Tallahassee

Bishop Gerald M. Barbarito
Diocese of Palm Beach

Bishop Frank J. Dewane
Diocese of Venice

Auxiliary Bishop Felipe J. Estevez
Archdiocese of Miami

Auxiliary Bishop John G. Noonan
Archdiocese of Miami