



Statement of the Catholic Bishops of Florida on the 36th Anniversary of *Roe v. Wade* January 22, 2009

As we mark the inauguration of a new president for our nation, we pause to reflect on the state of our country where over 50 million of our brothers and sisters have been denied their right to life. While *Roe v. Wade* instituted abortion on demand, *Doe v. Bolton* defined health exceptions so broadly that any restrictions could be avoided at any time during a pregnancy. Disappointingly, *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* (1992) reaffirmed *Roe*, though it did permit greater regulation of abortion. Likewise, *Gonzales v. Carhart* (2007) offered some hope by upholding the partial birth abortion ban, but abortion on demand is still the law of the land. Pope Benedict XVI has said, "The fundamental human right, the presupposition of every other right, is the right to life itself." However, our nation unjustly allows laws that dictate who is worthy of life, defying God's natural law of how life is created.

Surveys of the American people show their increasing discomfort with abortion on demand and the idea that abortion is the solution for a woman with an unexpected pregnancy. The truth is abortion kills not only the tiny child conceived in the womb but also injures the mother, leaving her to cope with the emotional and physical pain. A father involved in an abortion decision must also deal with post-abortion feelings of sadness and depression. We offer our thanks to the men and women who support and serve at crisis pregnancy centers and encourage parishes to help pregnant women and their children through the Gabriel Project.

If you or your loved one have participated in an abortion and want to reconcile with the Church, our Catholic priests are available to offer the sacrament of reconciliation as an instrument to healing and peace. The Church also offers Project Rachel and Rachel's Vineyard where you will receive nonjudgmental acceptance and feel God's unconditional love.

At the present time, we are very concerned about the revival of anti-life legislation, such as the Freedom of Choice Act and/or individual proposals based on its many elements. If enacted, these bills could deprive states of the right to enact modest restraints and regulations on the abortion industry. These proposals could force all Americans to subsidize abortion with their tax dollars, counteracting any and all efforts by government and others of good will to reduce the number of abortions in our country.

Current laws restricting abortion such as parental notification, informed consent, the demand for partial-birth abortion and protection of infants born alive after a failed abortion must be upheld and maintained. Our concern includes the potential for abortion clinic deregulation and mandated federal funding. This unease extends to the potential destruction of freedom of conscience protections for doctors, nurses and health care workers whose personal convictions prevent cooperation in the killing of unborn children and the threat of requiring Catholic health care institutions to provide abortion on demand. Faithful Catholics and responsible citizens must oppose any and all attempts to incrementally pass these destructive and evil laws. (***See www.flacathconf.org/federallifelegislation.htm.***)

There can be no freedom, justice or peace while we continue to deny the rights of members of the human race. Let us continue to build a culture of life starting with protection for the most vulnerable human beings, the unborn.

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, JCL
Diocese of Palm Beach

Bishop Frank J. Dewane
Diocese of Venice

Auxiliary Bishop Felipe J. Estévez
Archdiocese of Miami

Auxiliary Bishop John G. Noonan
Archdiocese of Miami